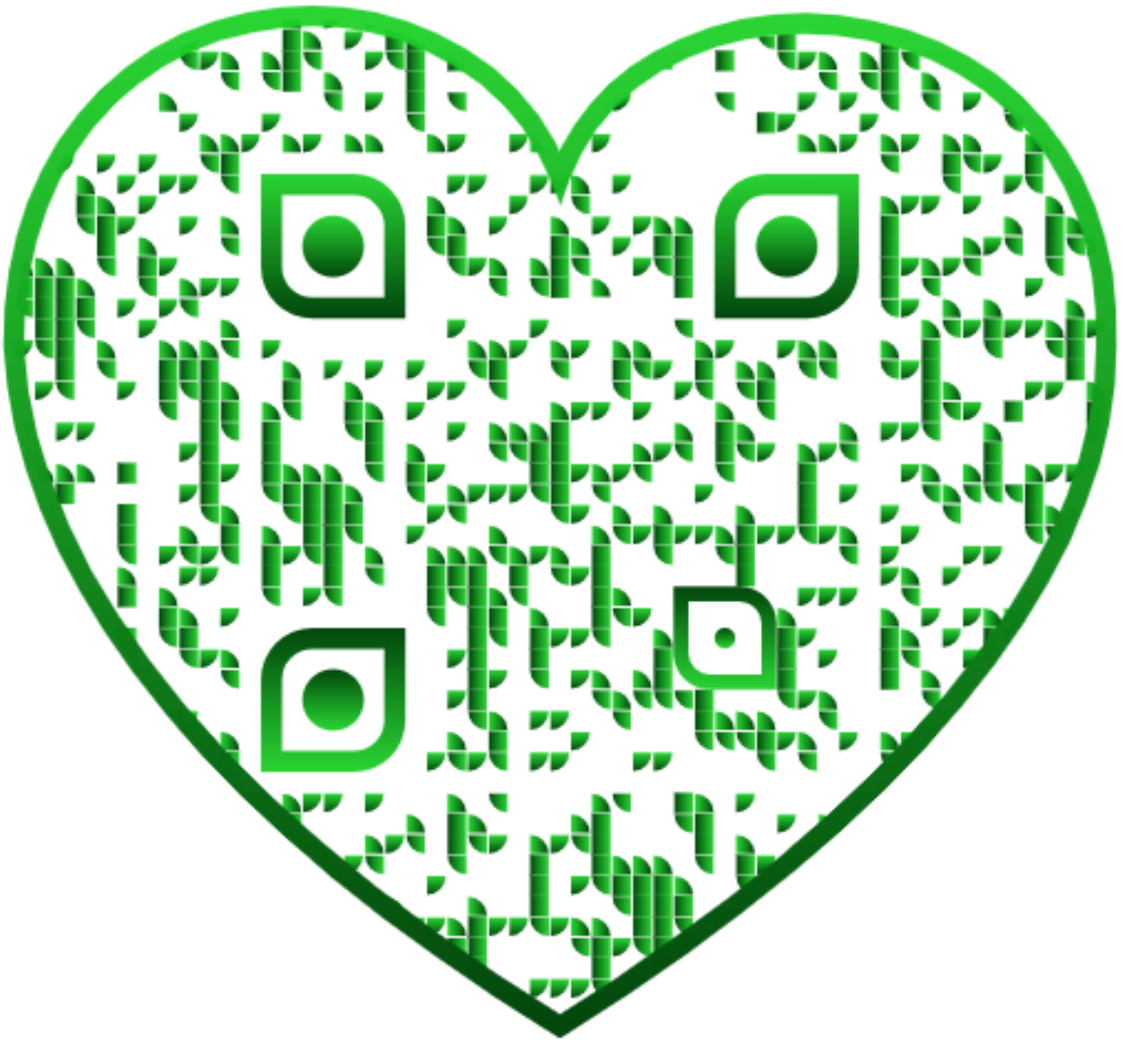
LISA MARCHIANO
and DEBORAH STEWART *with* JOSEPH LEE
the hosts of *This Jungian Life* podcast

DREAM WISE

UNLOCKING THE MEANING OF YOUR DREAMS

Foreword by James Hollis, PhD



Dream Wise

Unlocking the Meaning of Your Dreams

Lisa Marchiano
and Deborah Stewart with Joseph Lee

Contents

Foreword

Introduction: The Call to Adventure
Chapter 1 Why Work with Dreams? Becoming Whole
Chapter 2 Meet the Dream Maker: Befriending Your Inner Guide
Chapter 3 Dream Images: Association, Explanation, and Amplification
Chapter 4 The Dubious Dream Ego: Encounters in the Inner World
Chapter 5 Emotions: The Dream Maker's Palette
Chapter 6 Theater of Dreams: Structure and Dynamics
Chapter 7 Time and Telos: Past, Present, and Future
Chapter 8 Shadow: The Inner Exile
Chapter 9 Anima and Animus: Our Unrealized Possibilities
Chapter 10 The Self: The Guiding Center
Chapter 11 Active Imagination: Dreaming the Dream On
Chapter 12 Working with a Dream: Using the Keys

Acknowledgments
Appendix 1 How to Recall Your Dreams
Appendix 2 The Ring of Keys: All 69 Keys
Resources
Notes
About the Authors
About Sounds True

Foreword

Who among us has not awakened from a dream wondering whence it came, what it might mean, and whether one might understand it? Who among us has not wished to find some key with which to unlock the often opaque imagery through which the psyche invites a dialogue with consciousness? This book, *Dream Wise*, is such a book—a book that provides theory, practical tools for interpretation, multiple examples of dreamwork, and keeps open the mystery of why we dream and what these spectral visitants might be asking in return.

One study of dreams concluded that if we live to eighty years old, six years of our life will have been spent dreaming—not sleeping, which is a far higher percentage. Six years dreaming! Apparently, dreams are tied to our nature and its effort to process, metabolize, correct, and heal the fissures that lie within each of us. Further studies indicate that we dream up to six dreams per night, far more than we remember. The most I ever received from a client was eighteen in one week—beautifully typed and recorded. But most of us catch only fragments here and there. And even more troubling, most of us find a ready, convenient interpretation for our dreams —"Oh, that is what I saw on television last night"—which effectively "explains" the dream, and shuts down its radical otherness, its challenge to ego consciousness to engage and enlarge through this invited dialogue.

As we all know, the problem with the unconscious is that it is unconscious. We can say nothing definitive about it; however, so much of what we ascribe to the unconscious shows up in our behaviors, our flights of phantasy, our self-defeating patterns, and so on. Attending to dreams, however recondite their forms may seem, is one way to open the door to what is going on below the realm of our conscious awareness—and dreams are readily available.

I do not believe there is such a thing as a "bad" dream. Though we may not like its contents or its summons to accountability, or we are even frightened by it, all dreams are part of the psyche's effort to heal, to correct, and to solicit a more informed engagement. Jung described this activity of

the psyche as the "transcendent function," namely, the effort of the soul to bridge our two worlds in service to both development and healing. Both dreams and symptoms are examples of the transcendent function at work. Though the unconscious remains distant from ego awareness, we do have the symptom, or the dream, that is conscious, and each visitant has one foot in the dual realms. By respecting and tending this manifestation of the unconscious, we can finally begin to discern the direction of the psyche's desire for us.

Working with dreams requires that each of us must wrestle with this paradox: there is something deep within each of us, some locus of autonomous energy, that knows us better than we know ourselves. As Jung put it, would you not wish to converse with a two-million-year-old sage who knocked at your door, who knows what nature knows and perhaps the dreamer has forgotten? So each night, then, this source of natural sagacity comes to us and invites a conversation. Seen this way, how could we not pay some respectful attention to such a summons?

I once had a client whom I asked to try to remember her dreams, and she, having solicited therapy, replied, "Oh, but I don't want you to know me that well." As one can imagine, there were some obstacles to our work, but her ambivalence is understandable. Respecting a dream is a humbling experience. It says to the ego, "Here is something else you did not know about yourself. How are you going to deal with that?" But, if one sticks with the process, over time, the work becomes gratifying, and then transformative. What is happening in this process is the shifting of "authority" from "out there"—the world to which we are obliged to daily report—to the core truths of our world within—the inner reality to which we are also asked to report and respect.

Dreams are not necessarily pleasant walks in the cloudy spheres but can take us into the darkest places. However, if our psyche is identifying those engagements, ignoring them does not make the issue go away. It simply goes underground once again, metastasizes, and shows up in our relationships and in our failed fumblings of that intersection of fate and destiny where conscious choices are most critical or neglected. Our undone business may be unloaded onto our children, who inherit the developmental journey that we forgot or fled.

Jung asked us a telling question: What supports you when nothing supports you? What can you turn to when your instructions from the world have led you astray? What can you count on when the world you built is no longer livable? Then, in that darkness, a light flickers and the dream appears. I recall that I was in my fourth year of analysis in Zürich when I walked out of my therapy session with one more dream underlining the critical issue I was facing at the time. After four years of therapy and considerable expense of time and money, I was clearly committed to that process, but at that moment I realized that my psyche had been saying the same message over and over. I knew then that my resistance was futile, and that my choice ahead was difficult but clear. At that moment the dreamwork moved from an affirmation of the mind to a felt experience, from intellectual commitment to a warming of the heart. In the darkness, the dream appears, not as a telex telling us what to do, as the ego would wish, but as a symbolic expression of the dilemma, whence the blocking agent has come, and what the task ahead now asks of us.

Dream Wise is an informed, practical guide to working with your dreams. It is filled with insights into the dreaming process, symbolic formation, and the importance of tending to this conversation with the world that courses within each of us. The authors, Jungian analysts Marchiano, Stewart, and Lee, have many years of experience behind them. This stuff, this dreamwork, is real. We may be captivated by the dancing forms before our mind's eyes, the demands of the tangible world around us, but much of that world is governed by the invisible world that moves and shapes our choices. This inner world is just as real, perhaps even more than the tangible world, because our presence, our choices, our being in that outer arena is governed by the psyche's agenda, not the ego's. Our dreams are not here to comfort us or make life easy. That is why so many of us pay so little attention to them. Rather, they ask of us attentiveness, respect, humility—and, ultimately, accountability in the world of action.

Dream Wise is a considerable contribution to the field of analytic psychology and a practical guide to working with your dreams. Taking this book seriously means taking your life seriously, and in so doing, you will find your life deepening. A quiet sense of growing authority will support you when the rest of the world does not, and you will find your life swimming in the deep mystery of your time on this earth, but you will also experience something accompanying you in that process. Then you will

find what supports you when nothing supports you. Then you will be comforted by, rather than threatened by, the idea that something within you knows you better than you know yourself. Then your ego consciousness will be reframed, enlarged, and deepened. You cannot get to that place without attending to what within you is wishing expression through you. Be assured that absorbing the tools, techniques, and attitudes described so well in *Dream Wise* will be there on that journey with you.

James Hollis, PhD
Jungian Analyst, Author

Introduction

The Call to Adventure

If we pay attention to our dreams, instead of living in a cold, impersonal world of meaningless chance, we may begin to emerge into a world of our own, full of important and secretly ordered events.

—Marie-Louise von Franz

The Guardian at the Threshold

I'm riding a great, shaggy beast like a woolly mammoth. It is slow and plodding, carrying me toward what I know to be a great canyon. Before me looms a rock doorway through which I will need to pass to get to the canyon, and standing above the door is a woman dressed in robes. I somehow know I need to ask her permission before entering the canyon. Just then, a man on horseback rides toward the doorway at great speed. He slows only momentarily to acknowledge the guardian of the door. She lifts her hand, signaling him to stop, but he charges forward and rides through the doorway. The woman turns, and with a gesture of her hand incinerates the man and his horse. I am overcome with shock.

Brynn was in her late forties when she had this dream. Her children were in college, and she had moved to a city where she knew no one. Her husband worked long hours, and her job was overwhelming. Lonely and lost, she decided to try psychotherapy, though she was doubtful it could help with problems that were clearly situational.

Brynn's Jungian-oriented therapist suggested she pay attention to her dreams. Although it seemed implausible that discussing dreams would help her feel less adrift or deal with her difficult boss, at least her therapist had a game plan. Week after week, Brynn recorded her dreams and discussed them in therapy. She found them interesting, though essentially irrelevant to solving her "real-life" problems.

Then Brynn experienced her independent and powerful inner world through this dream. Her dream was like a memory. She had lived the lumbering ride toward the canyon on the beast, seen the priestess, and witnessed the horseman's execution. Instead of solutions to outer-world problems, Brynn had been introduced to an interior realm full of mysterious import and aliveness. A new world had opened, and she was ready to ride her beast into it.

Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz noted that "dreams cannot protect us from the vicissitudes and illnesses and sad events of human existence. But they do give us a guiding line on how to cope with them, how to find meaning in our lives, how to fulfill our destiny—follow our own star, so to speak—in order to realize the greater potential of life within us."[1] Brynn's dream was giving her just such a guiding line. It was saying, *You think the problem is about your job or your husband's unavailability. But something deeper is what matters.*

The Mystery of Dreams

Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), renowned Swiss psychiatrist, theorist, and founder of analytical psychology, discovered that dreams speak a primordial language and convey the wisdom of the unconscious. If understood, dreams can inform and enrich conscious life in significant ways. According to Jung, "Every dream, in its own manner, carries a message. It not only tells you that something is amiss in the depths of your being, it also brings you a solution for getting out of the crisis."[2]

Throughout his life, Jung was guided by his dreams. His memoir, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, relates important dreams that inspired him and shaped the events of his full and noteworthy life. Dreams helped Jung find his way at crucial junctures, confronted him when he was off course, and pointed out what he was missing. Dreams also connected him with the grand transpersonal themes coursing through his life.

Dream interpretation was central to Jung's work with patients. He estimated that over his lifetime he had interpreted about eighty thousand dreams.[3] Jung's highly nuanced way of working with dreams is the foundation for most modern schools of dreamwork, and dream interpretation continues to be a cornerstone of Jungian analysis. That's why

training to become an analyst features rigorous study and practice in learning the language of dreams: image, symbol, and feeling.

> Many things can be effective without being understood. But there is no doubt that we can enhance its effect considerably by understanding the dream, and this is often necessary because the voice of the unconscious so easily goes unheard.
>
> —C. G. Jung

The three of us—Lisa, Deb, and Joseph—trained together to become Jungian analysts. We have worked with many dreamers and their dreams, sometimes over many years. And each of us has had a long discipline of recording and working with our own dreams. Like Jung, we have been guided by our dreams. We've known them to confront, correct, and comfort us. We have awakened from our dreams feeling awed or heartened. We have regularly seen dreams support, guide, and challenge our patients and untangle agonizing knots in their lives. We know dreams are meaningful.

During our training, we spent many hours together in a room overlooking Philadelphia's picturesque Rittenhouse Square learning Jungian theory. We supported each other through exams and theses, companioned each other through losses and defeats, and celebrated and mourned when graduations separated one of us from the others. We shared many meals, endless cups of coffee, and lots of laughter. After we completed our studies and the common endeavor of training no longer provided guaranteed time together, we decided to try podcasting as a new creative collaboration. We committed to a one-year experiment—and six years later, we're still finding it fulfilling, challenging, and meaningful to create our weekly podcast, *This Jungian Life*. Dream interpretation is a key aspect of every episode.

Many Keys

This book is a practical guide to dream interpretation, written to translate the difficult art of dreamwork into manageable steps. Our approach is fundamentally Jungian, and we have differentiated and sequenced all of

Jung's major dream interpretation theories. But we have also added wisdom from skilled dreamworkers who have come after Jung. In addition, our own insights are included in this book, techniques that the three of us have developed over the years. Our goal has been to synthesize and make accessible the most useful and practical dreamwork concepts. We have made each of these techniques readily applicable and called them "keys," for they unlock the meaning of your dreams. In the following chapters, we explain the keys, illustrate them with a sample dream or two, and teach you to apply them to your own dreams. Most chapters also include a brief exploration of common dream motifs, such as being chased or undressed, or dreams featuring animals or houses. Though there are no fixed meanings for dream symbols, we offer ideas for consideration for these common themes.

> In the last analysis, most of our difficulties come from losing contact with our instincts, with the age-old forgotten wisdom stored up in us. And where we make contact with this old man in us? In our dreams.
>
> —C. G. Jung

As you move through the chapters, you will acquire more keys. Learning to use all the keys will help you become a fluent dreamworker, but it will take practice. As you read, it might help to apply each of the keys in a given chapter to your dreams before moving on to the next, so you have a chance to absorb the material. The goal is to *do* dreamwork, not just read about it. We have included a list of all of the keys at the back of the book so that you can refer to them easily. Once you have a few keys, you can start trying each one when you come to a dream door that's locked. Some keys may not fit, but others will open into inspiring insights.

A word about the sample dreams. All the dreams in this book are real dreams from real people, used with permission. We have even used some of our own dreams; when we do, we identify them as belonging to one of us—Deb, Lisa, or Joseph. Real dreams are messy. Though we have made an effort to find dreams that clearly illustrate each concept, many of the dreams will pertain to more than one key or contain imagery that may not be immediately relevant to the point we are discussing. Learning to be

comfortable with the messiness of dreams is an important part of working with them.

Some of the dreams included are blockbuster examples with fantastical images, such as Brynn's dream. Most of us really do have dreams like that, at least occasionally. However, we tried to include a lot of "ordinary" dreams as well. If your dreams seem commonplace—if they are confusing scraps with everyday imagery that don't elicit powerful emotions—don't be intimidated by the big, mythic dreams we've included. So-called ordinary dreams are also repositories of rich wisdom—your wisdom, tailored for you. Treasure your dreams no matter how simple, infrequent, or opaque they seem. Take heart that your dream maker, the wise, mysterious other within who creates your dreams, is faithfully crafting messages and sending them to you. Even a tiny, seemingly unexceptional dream fragment can open up a profound insight.

Mirrors Around the Central Fire

The unconscious does not fit into neat boxes. Jungian analyst Murray Stein reported that when one of Jung's students criticized him for being inconsistent on a point of theory, Jung responded, "I have my eye on the central fire, and I'm trying to put some mirrors around it to show to others. Sometimes the edges of those mirrors leave gaps and don't fit together exactly. I can't help that. Look at what I'm trying to point to!"[4] We make the same request of you as you read through this book. You may find there are gaps where things don't fit perfectly together. If you are puzzled by a concept, please keep reading. The unconscious—and the dreams that arise from it—lies outside the reach of reason, but when we approach it with an open heart, intuitive understanding builds.

There may also be places where categories blur and redundancies occur given overlap between ideas. Many of the keys approach similar concepts from differing perspectives. When you walk around a sculpture, you see it from various angles and experience its overall gestalt. In a similar manner, when we circumambulate a dream, we consider the same material from different vantage points, adding layers of meaning to create multidimensional understanding. Where the river flows into the bay, it is impossible to say which is fresh water and which is salt. Don't get too

preoccupied by the lack of clear boundaries between concepts. Do your best to keep your eye on the central fire.

Many people have difficulty remembering their dreams, but research reveals that we all dream for almost two hours every night. Though dreaming can occur at any point, the most vivid dreams usually occur during a sleep stage known as rapid eye movement, or REM. REM is the fourth stage of sleep, during which the heart rate is elevated and brain activity increases. Though scientists can't say exactly why we dream, there is evidence that it helps us consolidate memories and process emotions. Dreaming is widespread across the animal kingdom. Mammals and birds dream. Even octopuses and spiders appear to dream.[5] For it to be so prevalent, dreaming must confer a powerful adaptive advantage. You are likely dreaming every night even if you can't recall many dreams. If you are one of the many people who has trouble remembering your dreams, an appendix at the back offers suggestions for promoting recall. If you follow these diligently—and can offer a genuine welcome to your dream maker—your ability to remember dreams should improve.

Working with dreams will require the cultivation of a new attitude. You'll need to relax your literal mind and get comfortable with uncertainty, paradox, and even confusion. If you find this difficult, think of dreamwork as play. Play is serious, engrossing, and joyful. When we play, we become immersed in our task, suspend our rational mind, and open to the imaginal realm. Working with dreams requires flexibility, fluidity, and fluency in the symbolic. Approaching dreams with a playful spirit will help.

Your Unknown Rooms

A dream is like a house with many splendid, locked rooms, and this book provides keys to open their doors. Following the guidance in this book will aid you if you have been seeking more connection with your surprising, guiding, abiding inner life. It has been there all along waiting for you. If you're hungry for a deeper perspective that you sense is there but haven't been able to access, this book will help. This book is for those who want to meet the faithful other, the dream maker, who visits each night with gifts of wisdom—and it's for those who are up for an adventure like no other.

Behind the veil of sleep lies a world of mythic images, improbable encounters, and strange beauty. Dreams companion us nightly, reminding us that we participate in another dimension beyond consciousness. Dreams let us know we are not alone. While our waking hours may concern themselves with the mundane, the practical, and the specific, our dreams attest to a way of being that transcends the limits of consciousness and provides us with another perspective. Dreams are nightly proof that there is something big, deep, powerful, and mysterious always at work beneath the ordinary surface of everyday life.

1

Why Work with Dreams?

Becoming Whole

My intuition consisted in a sudden and most unexpected insight into the fact that my dream meant myself, my life and my world, my whole reality . . .

—C. G. Jung

In his memoir, written a few years before his death at the age of eighty-five, Jung reflected on the course of his life. "It seems to me that I have been carried along. I exist on the foundation of something I do not know. In spite of all uncertainties, I feel a solidity underlying all existence and a continuity in my mode of being."[1] Jung experienced himself as having been borne toward an unseen fate by a force that was infinitely vast. He named this process "individuation."

Individuation is the fullest possible development of our personal selves in living relationship to the unknowable foundation that carries us along. It is the lifelong process of growing into the person we were meant to be—of becoming whole. Just as every acorn contains the blueprint for an oak tree, our possibilities and personalities develop over time according to an innate design. We have the capacity to become uniquely ourselves. Unlike acorns, we also have the ability to engage in our own unfolding. Doing so will require devotion to our own growth, and demand self-confrontation and self-acceptance.

To individuate, we must submit to a process that is beyond conscious understanding. We must cultivate a passionate interest in ourselves, especially toward those parts of us we don't like. Individuation requires us to greet each setback, heartache, or disappointment as an opportunity to know ourselves more deeply so that we can develop into our fullest possible version. "The urge to become what one is is invincibly strong, and you can always count on it," wrote Jung, "but that does not mean that things will

necessarily turn out positively. If you are not interested in your own fate, the unconscious is."[2]

Committing to individuation helps us fulfill our unique pattern. When you do so, you remain open—to love, to criticism, to being wrong, to suffering, to joy. You feel your feelings. You admit your weaknesses but claim your strengths. You stand up for yourself and your truth, but you don't remain in a defensive crouch longer than needed. We all know people who embody these traits. We like to be around them. Their humility, openness, and warmth draw us to them. They are unique individuals and don't merely parrot conventional opinions. We sense their depth, yet they are playful and can laugh at themselves. Even if they are quite elderly, they possess a youthfulness of spirit and a robust enjoyment of life.

Ultimately, individuation is a process of coming to terms with the unconscious. Individuation requires that we accept that we are more than our conscious personality—our ego—and want to meet the rest of us. Dreams are one of the best, most reliable ways to get to know our mysterious depths. Dreams draw our attention to what we have forgotten, discarded, or left undeveloped. They are the door through which the unknown, exiled, or banished parts of us find their way to consciousness. Sustained dreamwork facilitates a dialogue between the surface and the depths and is an essential aid in our process of unfolding.

Why Work with Dreams?

Our abundant dreams, if understood, are a compass to our true becoming. They are a conduit to the vast, unknowable foundation Jung spoke of, and they promote and document our experience of being carried along. As Jung discovered, "There are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life"—and dreams evidence the independent life of the soul.[3] They may seem inscrutable, yet there they are—indisputably and uniquely yours. Their wisdom is specific to you and your life situation, and learning their language is how you can most readily and faithfully integrate contents of the unconscious into consciousness—and engage in individuation.

Dreams address the unfinished business of daily life and anticipate future events. The unconscious takes in information that consciousness misses and

tells us through dreams what we have missed and misjudged. Because the unconscious is ahead of consciousness, dreams can alert us to possibilities and probabilities that may lie ahead. Dreams foster psychological equilibrium. Just as physical processes maintain homeostasis by regulating functions like temperature and blood pressure, dreams allow us to reestablish psychic balance by compensating for what is askew.

Consciousness is not as trustworthy as we would like to believe. Like a spotlight, it provides a bright but limited focus. It is, says Jung, still "frail, menaced by specific dangers, and easily injured."[4] The unconscious, if acknowledged and integrated, affords the conscious personality a deeper and wider psychic foundation that is deeply reassuring and stabilizing.

Dreams connect us with the eternal, revitalizing source Jung called the "collective unconscious." As Brynn realized, dreams provide images that are not related to personal experience. These images derive from universal forms Jung called "archetypes," and they most often arrive at the threshold of consciousness in dreams. These dynamic images link our everyday lives with the realm of myth, religion, and symbol. They grab our attention, reorient us, and liberate us from the narrow confines of "nothing but." They connect us with transcendent significance above and mythic reality below. They move us.

Through dreams we perceive some of life's profound meaning and mystery and come to know that we are part of a greater whole. Dreams have telos, direction, and purpose—they are in service to our growth. The unconscious is more than a repository of personal memories and forgotten events—it produces startling new insights that propel us forward.

> Your dreams are an expression of your inner life, and they can show you through what false attitude you have landed yourself in this blind alley.
>
> —C. G. Jung

Dreams confront us with shadow, and although nightmarish dreams can be distressing, they serve as a refining process for the ego by challenging us with hidden or exiled aspects of ourselves—which, if admitted into consciousness, would leave us less at their mercy. Jung says, "The most

intense [inner] conflicts, if overcome, leave behind a sense of security and calm that is not easily disturbed. . . . It is just these intense conflicts and their conflagration which are needed in order to produce valuable and lasting results."[5] Darkness is unavoidable; dreams provide us with opportunities to understand it instead of being sabotaged by it.

Dreams are a gateway to creativity. Dreams introduce us to the unthought and unknown. They ask us to meet them in the imaginal realm—and meander, mosey, and muse. Artists and scientists from Salvador Dali to Albert Einstein took inspiration from their dreams. Creativity requires engagement with the unconscious—the essence of dreamwork and an essential aspect of individuation.

When we work with dreams, our ego no longer weathers life's burdens alone; it is companioned by a mysterious other, present and observing as we navigate outer life. Even if a dream is puzzling, another perspective has been provided, reminding us that we are more than our waking selves.

Wisdom from Within

Your dreams may be strange and difficult to understand because they originate from a part of you that is mysterious and inscrutable, yet they are yours. The wisdom they contain comes from you and is specific to your life situation and psyche—the totality of your mind, including what is conscious and unconscious. A nursing mother's body knows how to create milk that is perfectly adapted to her baby's changing age, developmental stage, and even immunological challenges. In a similar way, your dream maker produces exactly the right dream for a particular moment. Your dreams are the medicine formulated by the dream maker to help you address a specific problem. The fourth-century Neoplatonist Synesius of Cyrene urged everyone to become an expert on their dreams because the knowledge found there "comes from us, is within us, and is the special possession of the soul of each one of us."[6] When you work with your dreams, you are consulting the wisdom of your own depths.

You Hold the First Key

Your dreams offer a wealth of wisdom and wonder, but you must—quite literally—rise to meet them. Writing down your dreams immediately upon awakening is crucial—they are the soul's exhalations and waft their way only briefly into consciousness. We suggest you mark your journey inward with a ritual of commitment. If dreamwork is a new practice—or if you are coming back to it after a hiatus—begin by writing a letter to your dream maker. Let it know that you are listening and pledge to record and attend to any dreams it sends. One way or another, extend yourself to the dream maker.

If you don't already have a dedicated dream journal, acquire one now and imbue this step with symbolic intention. You might purchase a handmade journal from an artisan, but you could also make a trip to a local store and select the notebook that is just the right size and color for you. Place it on your bedside table, with the pen you want to use—there are even ones with a tiny light at the tip for writing in the dark. Make reaching for your dream journal the first thing you do upon awakening and write down as much as you can. Writing the dream in the present tense can preserve a sense of immediacy. We also suggest you give your dream a title. Doing so can focus understanding and help you find specific dreams later.

Key: Make a commitment to your dreams.

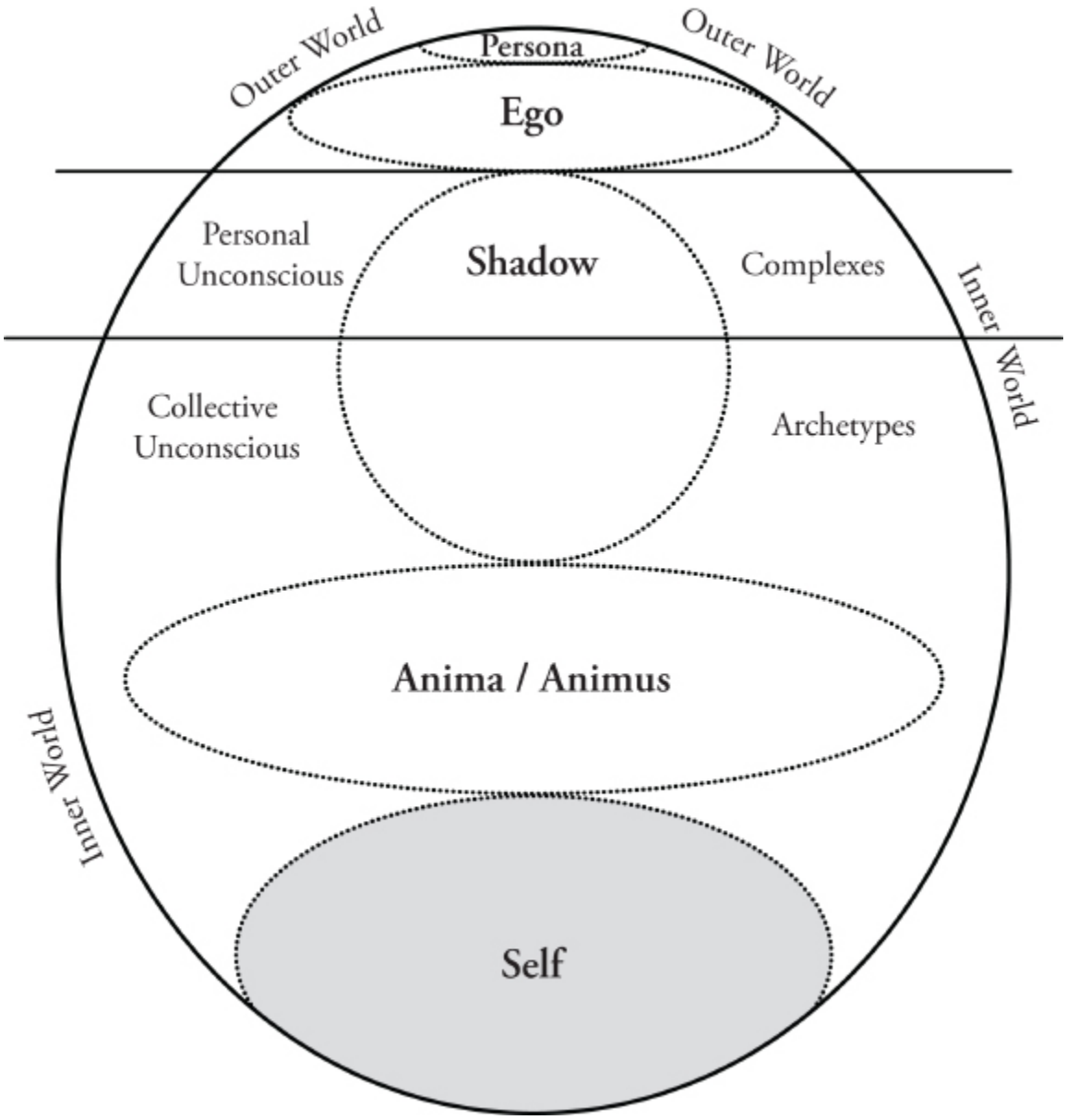
- If you don't already have a method of recording your dreams, come up with one that works for you. Purchase a dedicated dream journal, download an app, or otherwise create a special place where you will write down your dreams every morning.
- If you have trouble recalling your dreams, visit the appendix at the back of this book and experiment with some of our suggestions.
- Make writing in your dream journal the first thing you do every morning. Give your dream a title and write in the present tense.

Journaling Prompt

Write a letter to your dream maker expressing gratitude for its guidance. Let the dream maker know that you want to hear its wisdom and will pay attention to the gifts it sends.

Jung's Model of the Psyche

To understand dreams, it helps to have a basic understanding of the psyche. Jung had a unique vision of the psyche's structure and dynamics and how these are imaged in dreams. A map of the psyche will help us navigate the dream landscape: we can identify psychic elements, relate them to one another, and allow symbolic meaning to emerge.



Ego

The ego—our "I"—is the energy center of waking life: consciousness, will, values, desires, and identity are all functions of the ego. Ego relates to both inner and outer reality, allowing us to adapt to changing circumstances and exercise choice and autonomy. Ego is the source of a core, continuous sense of self—I am both the same person now as I was as a child and I am different. Like the tip of an iceberg, the ego rests above submerged, unconscious contents. Dreams eclipse ego and consciousness, for every night the other within—the dream maker—presents its own interests, ideas,

and images. The "I" in our dreams—the *dream ego*—is a stand-in for the waking personality. We recognize ourselves in dreams, though our dream ego's perceptions and actions are relative to a very different reality.

Persona

Persona, the Greek word for "mask," is the social face we show the world—it's our relational manager. As the cornea protects the eye, our persona protects us from the social grit of disapproval and mediates social interactions. Unlike the cornea, we shape our persona in tune with cultural norms—for example, showing different aspects of ourselves at work than we do at a party. Insufficient persona hinders relational adaptation and may cause us to be perceived as uncaring, inept, or awkward. Overidentification with persona results in an inauthentic and armored self that impedes intimacy. Altogether, it is necessary to differentiate ego from persona—we are not the roles we play in life (or on social media).

Shadow

Whereas persona tries to present an ideal self to the outer world, shadow is all we dislike, deny, and try to hide. It consists of parts of our personality that are incompatible with who we think we are or should be. Shadow usually announces itself with feelings like shame, fear, and anger, but shadow needs to be reclaimed if the ego is to grow. Shadow plays a major role in dreams and provides a counterweight to ego and persona. It appears most often as a person the same sex as the dreamer and usually represents a quality we have disowned. When you dream of a best friend, a disliked neighbor, or an irksome unknown person, it may represent your shadow. Our task is to relate, reflect, and make a place for it in consciousness.

Anima/Animus

The anima/animus usually appears in films, fiction, dreams—and waking life—as a compelling, opposite-sex *other*: what I am not. It can manifest in an idealized way, such as Helen of Troy or Superman, or in its dark aspect, in figures such as Medea and Dracula. Whereas shadow is largely related to personal experience, the anima/animus is infused with nonpersonal, archetypal qualities; light or dark, the anima/animus is captivating,

universal, and autonomous. The anima/animus is concerned with connecting us to the *inner* world and the collective unconscious. If this energy remains unconscious, it can possess us; when we can cultivate a relationship with it, it's inspiring.

Collective Unconscious

Having studied myths, symbols, and religious material, Jung posited a collective unconscious, a deep layer of psychic experience common to humankind. This concept is unique to Jungian psychology. The repository of prototypical, instinctual human experience over millennia, the collective unconscious is a wellspring of inherent, universal patterns and possibilities seen across cultures and throughout time. Images from the collective unconscious appear in dreams ranging from the familiar, such as a garden or hat, to those that shake us to our core, like a tsunami or an angel. The collective unconscious connects us all. It runs beneath our feet like an underground river, from which we all draw water. It is like a buried rhizome from which individual shoots grow. Underneath the surface, we all spring from the same root. We often meet images from this layer of the psyche in our dreams.

Archetype

Archetypes are the inherited, dynamic, and autonomous structures of life processes and patterns that make up the collective unconscious. All archetypes are bipolar—they have creative and destructive aspects. Because they embrace the wide range from instinct to spirit, archetypes have a powerful emotional charge that can overtake ego. Archetypes themselves are unrepresentable; we infer them through universal patterns in behavior, images, rituals, myths, symbols, and dreams. Archetypal images allow us to have a relationship with the unseen mover, the Self.

Complex

A complex is an autonomous center of energy formed by memories, sensory experiences, images, and ideas that coalesce around an archetypal core. Jung discovered complexes through his word association test early in his career: subjects' responses to stimulus words were delayed or inappropriate

if a word was emotionally loaded and caused unconscious interference. Complexes are dynamic factors in our psychic structure and are also shaped by personal experience, especially early relationships, internal conflict, and trauma. They are characterized by a strong feeling tone and bodily sensation —from infatuation to road rage—and can flood the ego and distort our sense of reality.

The Self

The concept of the Self—the center and circumference of the psyche—is the heart of Jungian psychology. The true center of the personality and the archetype of wholeness, the Self is the ordering principle that is both the basis of the ego and transcends it, unifying the archetypes and balancing the opposites. Encounters with the Self can be marked by numinous images and a sense of awe and otherness. The mysterious and central source of life energy, the Self is often represented by religious symbols and figures. "The self," wrote Jung, "is a fact of nature and always appears as such in immediate dreams and visions, . . . it is the spirit in the stone, the great secret which has to be worked out . . ."[7] The Self speaks to us in dreams, pointing ineluctably toward our becoming.

The Dream Maker Loves You

Your life in sleep—about a third of all your hours on earth—has a lot to say about you and the development that is individuation. This book provides keys that unlock the doors to your dreams. Dreamworker Jeremy Taylor has remarked that dreams always come in the interest of healing and wholeness.[8] The dream maker, our loyal inner companion, wants us to thrive. It is significant, perhaps, that the English word *dream* means both the visions that come to us at night and our highest aspirations. Dreams invite us to move beyond our ego, relate creatively to the nonrational, and recognize a faithful, fierce love that supports us from within. The dream maker's care for us never falters. Even if we ignore our dreams, they come night after night. "The dreams do not stop," write Jungian analysts Edward C. Whitmont and Sylvia Brinton Perera. "The Guiding Self does not withdraw the supportive flow of its expression, no matter who is or is not listening."[9]

Humanity's enduring relationship with the dreamworld spans eons. Though we don't have direct evidence that the majestic and ancient cave paintings at Lascaux and Chauvet were related to paleolithic dream life, dream researcher Kelly Bulkeley has posited that it is likely that our ancestors may have slept and dreamed in these subterranean spaces that functioned as shamanic dream incubation chambers. Possibly, the astonishing images painted on the walls were inspired by their dreams.[10]

Everyone everywhere dreams. A cuneiform tablet records the dream of Gudea, a Sumerian king 2,700 years ago. Myoe Shonin, a twelfth-century Japanese ascetic monk, kept dream journals for forty years. When the prophetic dreams of Lucrecia de León, a sixteenth-century Spanish woman, came true, contradicting the king's decisions, she was executed. Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini recorded his dreams, and their influence is apparent in his important films.

Throughout our lives, dreams come that frighten or disturb us. They confound us with their perplexing imagery, make us laugh at their absurdity, and astound us with their stunning insights. We have dreams that trouble us, casting an inexplicable pall on our days; and we have dreams that shimmer with a magical intimation of secret realms, speaking to us of other realities.

Dreams are available to all of us, no matter the circumstances of our birth or life situation. If we are poor, ill, or uneducated, we have access to the same inner riches as anyone else. No one can take our dreams from us. They are the inviolate dominion of our soul. Dreams will come whether we want them to or not. We cannot avoid or refuse them. We can, however, decide what we do with them. You, valiant reader, have chosen to open yourself to your dreams and let them move you, change you, and amaze you. You have chosen to befriend the inner companion, the dream maker.

2

Meet the Dream Maker

Befriending Your Inner Guide

In each of us there is another whom we do not know. He speaks to us in dreams and tells us how differently he sees us from the way we see ourselves. When, therefore, we find ourselves in a difficult situation to which there is no solution, he can sometimes kindle a light that radically alters our attitude—the very attitude that led us into the difficult situation.

—C. G. Jung

Each of us has a mysterious other within who observes our lives and shares its perspective each night. The dream maker is our autonomous, unfaltering companion, offering insights that enlarge understanding and guide us toward the mysterious process of unfolding that Jung termed "individuation." The life-enriching wisdom of dreams exists in everyone. We just need to learn how to access it.

Moving through life is like driving a car. As you drive, you scan signs, navigate the route, and deal with traffic. In the back seat, an invisible passenger pays attention to every detail, especially what distracts or upsets you. If you and your passenger were asked about the trip, you'd have very different accounts. You might recall road work in progress, beautiful scenery, or a rain squall. Your passenger would reflect on your snacking, whether you were alert or sleepy, and how you dealt with the aggressive driver on Route 20. Your passenger observes your actions and reactions—and comments, confronts, and offers course corrections.

The backseat traveler is the dream maker, reporting nightly on your drive through life. The dream maker's insights can offer instinctual wisdom, provide a new approach to a problem, connect you with an emotional truth—and even put you in touch with a sense of purpose. The dream maker's reports affect you even if you don't remember or understand them. But

recalling and working with your dreams speeds up the integration of helpful perspectives.

With the dream maker's aid, we grow toward wholeness. It assists us in discovering new potentials, attitudes, and abilities. We gain surprising insights and become better informed and more balanced. But there's a catch: the dream maker speaks a different language, and it's up to us to learn it. Like someone visiting a foreign country, we must orient to strange new sights, attitudes, and ways of seeing the world as we explore our dreams.

To do so, it will be helpful to remember four things. First, **dreams are symbolic**. Your dream maker seldom has access to the directed thought and straightforward language of your conscious, waking mind. The dream maker is an ancient part of us that speaks in image, metaphor, and symbol, and relies on intuition and feeling instead of linear thinking and explicit expression. Jung discovered that dreams are not disguises, as Sigmund Freud thought, but the clearest possible representations of psychic realities conveyed in the language of the unconscious. Dreams can be hard to understand because they speak a foreign tongue, but what they have to say is never pointless or obfuscating. Learning the dream maker's language starts by cultivating a symbolic attitude in tune with the mythic cadence of dreams.

The second thing to keep in mind is that **dreams present a fresh perspective**. The dream maker's views can differ radically from our conscious mind's opinions and values. Jung said dreams are "invariably seeking to express something that the ego does not know and does not understand."[1] If you wake up with a dream whose meaning seems immediately clear, take a moment to reconsider. If the dream doesn't bring new information, the dream maker wouldn't have gone to the trouble of crafting it. It's more likely that the dream maker is offering an unexpected take on your attitude and behavior.

The third thing to remember is that **the "I" in the dream is usually the least trustworthy part**. Often at night our dream ego—the "I" in the dream—is confronted by figures that frighten, denigrate, or frustrate. Upon awakening, we tend to side with our dream ego and assume that the figures that have crossed us in the dream are mistaken or threatening. Usually, however, the new attitude suggested by the dream only seems wrong

according to the conscious viewpoint. If we can set aside the prejudices of consciousness, we might see that a helpful, alternative perspective is being offered.

Finally, **dreams are usually about the inner world**. The dream maker is mostly interested in us. In waking life, the external world demands our attention; we turn our faces outward to interact with others, accomplish tasks, and achieve goals. However, the dream maker remarks primarily on things happening in the interior. We are often tempted to see dreams as commentaries on external-world people and situations, but the dream maker usually selects familiar people and places to depict dynamics in our inner world.

Remember that the dream maker is your constant companion, always with you as you journey through life. Its perceptions are psychic facts, and it is generous in sharing them. Our choice is whether to make them conscious. Your dream maker offers you a rewarding relationship. Its only goal is to serve your wholeness.

Key: The dream maker is the inner companion.

The dream maker provides a fresh perspective on your life, pointing out what you might not have noticed or have been avoiding. As you consider your dream, imagine it was sent by an inner guide who wants to help you.

Dreams Are Symbolic

We aren't used to symbolic thinking. We tend to respond to dream images concretely. But as we begin to work with dreams, we'll learn that the dream maker is a poet who conjures myriad nuanced meanings using imagery and metaphor. As an example, here is a forty-three-year-old woman's dream:

Candy Corn

I was buying treats for Halloween. The chocolate candy was expensive, so I bought candy corn in bulk from a barrel. I could make up small bags

for trick or treat when I got home.

The dreamer was a stay-at-home mom who tended to discount herself. A literal reading seems to address a minor concern in waking life, but if we consider the symbolic significance of the images, we may hear the dream maker alerting the dreamer that she is shortchanging her inner life. Today, Halloween is a fun children's holiday, but it is rooted in ancient myth and religion—it spans two worlds. Two thousand years ago, the Celts celebrated the festival of Samhain on November 1. It marked winter's onset and was believed to be the time when the veil between the worlds was thin and the dead could return and walk among us. All Hallows' Eve was a night to acknowledge the invisible world and pay its denizens their due. People gathered at bonfires wearing costumes, offering sacrifices, and asking for protection. The offerings were an attempt to appease the spirits so they would not cause trouble. Today we hear this echoed when our children dress as ghosts and say, "Trick or treat!"

Even the image of chocolate candy partakes of the symbolic world. For the ancient Maya, chocolate was a gift from Quetzalcoatl, the god of wisdom, and it played an important role in sacred religious ceremonies. A symbolic understanding of the dream shows where the ancient, invisible forces that shape our lives have been neglected—the dream ego didn't choose the sacred chocolate. The dream is an invitation to the dreamer to take herself more seriously and honor the spiritual dimension of life that lies beneath everyday reality.

Jung distinguished a symbol from a sign. Signs represent something specific: stylized images of a man and a woman indicate public restrooms; a red light signals stop. Often, our first impulse when considering a dream is to assume its components are encoded signs in the manner of a substitution cipher that replaces a letter with another letter or a number. If every letter of the alphabet corresponded with a number, 12-15-22-5 would mean "love." It can be tempting to treat dream images like this. When Freud looked for sexual imagery in dreams, he was thinking like a code breaker. Any long, cylindrical object was assumed to represent a penis. Equivalence is appealing because it allows our waking mind the comfort of being in control—we like to think we can crack the code.

"If the word is a sign," wrote Jung, "it means nothing. But if the word is a symbol, it means everything."[2] A sign doesn't expand on the meaning of the thing indicated; it simply replaces it and represents something that is already known. It doesn't invite us to consider multiple, overlapping, or paradoxical shades of meaning. Dream dictionaries that purport to decode dream images treat them as signs, sometimes in preposterous ways. One online dream dictionary says that dreaming of a bagel means something essential is missing from your life! Reading dream images as signs rather than symbols reduces the range of possible meanings, even for a humble bagel. Understanding the symbolic message of a bagel in a dream would require exploring several levels of significance, including associations unique to the dreamer.

Let's see how a symbolic approach opens layers of meaning in the following dream of a forty-three-year-old man:

Biker Gang

I'm at home with my wife and dog at night. I see dozens of headlights winding up the driveway and hear the roar of motorcycle engines. I understand immediately that a biker gang has arrived to cause terror. I hand my wife a baseball bat and grab my gun. I know this is going to be bad.

What do these bikers represent on a symbolic level? Understanding the dream depends on the answer to this question. The dreamer didn't have any personal experiences with bikers but felt they were likely to be lawless. Their roaring engines and blazing headlights were an aggressive intrusion on the peace and privacy of his home. The dreamer likened the bikers to his in-laws, who in waking life were pushy, showing up uninvited as overnight guests. If bikers are "code" for in-laws, we'll have cracked it and we're done—and it would be a satisfying interpretation since it would confirm the dreamer's negative feelings about his in-laws. We tend to ascribe conscious attitudes to the unconscious, and our ego enjoys validation of its beliefs.

But dreams usually tell us something we don't already know. Since the dreamer was familiar with his feelings toward his in-laws, searching for a symbolic understanding of the biker gang led to exploring other possible

meanings that brought new information. He had difficulty standing up for himself in his marriage. He felt guilty if he disagreed with his wife, so he frequently gave in to her preferences, even when something mattered to him. The dreamer had banished his inner "bad boy." His denied aggression, symbolized as bikers, literally ganged up on him, bringing the headlights of consciousness and drawing attention to his need to harness healthy aggression in service to authenticity and growth. Equating the bikers with the dreamer's in-laws would have obscured the dream maker's invitation to access assertiveness in his relationship.

As Jungian analyst James Hollis writes, "The images which arise out of the depths, be they the burning bush of biblical imagery, the complaint of the body, or the dream we dream tonight, link us to that throbbing, insistent hum which is the sound of the eternal."[3] Dreams arise from the invisible world, the universal psychic substrate that connects us with each other and the cosmos. A symbolic understanding of their imagery can make this vital relationship vivid and conscious. Symbols have mystery and aliveness in them because they allude to something that can't be fully known. What cannot be put into words can be apprehended by symbols. Just as a poet uses metaphor to capture the ineffable, dreams use symbols to point toward that which is beyond words. "A symbol," wrote Jung, "does not define or explain; it points beyond itself to a meaning that is darkly divined yet still beyond our grasp, and cannot be adequately expressed in the familiar words of our language."[4] Symbolic thinking gives us access to the realm of the psyche that extends beyond ordinary reality into the primordial depths of the unconscious. Symbols affect us emotionally because they are laden with layers of meaning beyond reason. That's why, as Jung said, it is the symbol that heals.

> As a plant produces its flower, so the psyche creates its symbols. Every dream is evidence of this process.
>
> —C. G. Jung

We sense this in the following dream of a man in his fifties:

Pinpoints of Light

I was in a dark space, like a vast cavern. I couldn't see the walls or ceiling but was not afraid. I felt I was meant to be there and wait, though I didn't know what I was waiting for. Then I heard a very low hum that gradually grew louder, and I could make out tiny pinpoints of light. People were coming toward me singing—I felt an indescribable feeling of welcome.

The atmosphere and imagery of this dream suggest an initiation into a secret society, and the motif of the cave gives a sense of entering into an underworld space. This dreamer, who had long felt that belonging was contingent upon earning others' approval, experienced the power of this dream's multidimensional symbolic impact. The dreamer has been welcomed into an inner world of sacred mystery. Through symbols, dreamwork connects us with our personal depths and to the inscrutable underground source from which psychic life springs. Symbols move us into connection with a greater whole.

It takes practice to see things through a symbolic lens. Most of us find ourselves defaulting to a literal understanding of our dreams when we first consider them. This can be true even when we have been working with our dreams for years. Apprehending a dream's symbolic significance goes beyond a simple cognitive skill. While we can work to understand dreams, dream analysis is not an exercise in nailing down a precise interpretation so that the dream becomes emptied of all mystery and nuance. Be prepared to approach the dream with humility and appreciate it on its own terms.

A dream is a visit to another place, an undiscovered country. Before you begin to *think* about a dream and its symbols, it can help to *experience* it. The dream maker has created an immersive imaginal world, replete with sensory details and an evocative atmosphere. It is a happening in a foreign realm with its own subjectivity and internal logic. Take some time to revisit the dream in your imagination. Examine what you see around you. What do you hear? Are there any smells? What time of day is it? How is the weather? What do you touch? Note all the details and their effect on you as you observe them. Engaging your senses in perceiving the dream world helps you appreciate the complexity of this incredible creation and stokes your curiosity and symbolic imagination.

Experiencing the dream world with your senses first may help you approach the dream symbolically. If you find yourself reverting to concrete interpretations, remind yourself to take a symbolic approach. This will likely involve stepping back, dropping preconceived notions, and working with the images slowly and methodically. Techniques offered later in this book will help you do this.

Luckily dreams are not the only opportunity to engage in symbolic thinking. If you like movies, you are regularly exposed to a rich source of symbolic imagery. Films are a little like collective dreams that we all share. The next time you sit down to enjoy a movie, you might ask yourself, *What if this were a dream? What themes are explored and how are these represented symbolically?* Conversely, imagining that your dream is a movie can sometimes allow you to get a bit more distance from the images, helping you see it as the symbolic creation that it is. You might try seeing yourself sitting in a dark theater, watching your dream play out before you on the screen. What is your movie about? What metaphors did the director employ?

Although symbolic meanings are highly personal, Jung also acknowledged "relatively fixed" symbols, because without them, the unconscious would lack the structure essential to meaning. The ocean's depths signify the unconscious; animals represent qualities of instinctual energy; and the stars are associated with the divine, for they let us know that we are part of a great, glorious whole. "All these symbols are relatively fixed," Jung wrote, "but in no single case can we have the *a priori* certainty that in practice the symbol must be interpreted in that way."[5] In other words, relatively fixed meanings for certain symbols can provide a compass point that signals a general direction to go in when searching for understanding.

Unlike static definitions in dream-decoding dictionaries, symbol dictionaries open us to the significance of myriad images represented over time and across cultures in art, mythology, poetry, and religion. Commentaries on symbols based on far-reaching research help us access additional time-honored possibilities for meaning. For example, to understand a dream featuring a pet cat, personal experience naturally matters: its name, personality, and our relationship with it. Turning to a symbol dictionary (several of our favorites are listed in the resources

section) adds historical, literary, and metaphorical aspects of "cat-ness" and honors the cat's dual nature as posh puss and pitiless predator. Considering both personal and mythic meanings will help us understand the significance of many images.

Dreams of Death: Symbolic Endings

When we dream of imminent death—falling, an oncoming tsunami, or a gunman about to shoot—it's alarming. We may also dream of a loved one's death. Do such dreams portend misfortune? Most of the time, dreams of death dramatize a *symbolic* ending. "Death in the dream world is always deeply associated with the growth of personality and character," according to dreamworker and author Jeremy Taylor.[1] Life transitions can involve the loss of relationships, beliefs, or roles and are often represented as a death—which is, as many a myth attests, the precondition for new development.

A mother dreamed, feeling grief-stricken, that her adolescent son had died, and upon waking was worried that the dream was a premonition. When considering a symbolic perspective, however, she realized the dream represented her need to mourn her son's childhood as he approached high school graduation and departure for college.

We may also dream about being the killer, and murder an intruder, a monster, or even someone we know. Although such dreams are upsetting, the same question applies: What has been killed? Death is final. Something is over once and for all. It's our job, as dreamworkers, to discover what has died or needs to die. A death in the inner world is just as real as one in the outer world. We may feel its loss acutely—and can mourn it consciously.

Although a symbolic approach to understanding dreams is crucial, sometimes dreams can be as factual as a bank statement. A man woke up recalling a voice saying, "You have colon cancer." The man went to his doctor, who confirmed that he did indeed have colon cancer—fortunately at an early and treatable stage. Precognitive dreams can also be explicit: While pregnant, Deb had recurring dreams of having boy-girl twins. Because the

dreams occurred early in her pregnancy and the dream births took place in a magical way, she discounted them. Late in her pregnancy she discovered she was having twins—a girl and a boy. Her dreams had intuited an internal reality, although their import was understood only in hindsight.

Key: Shift into a symbolic perspective.

Be wary of a tendency to "decode" dreams as if they were substitution cyphers. Instead, consider the following:

- What is your sensory experience of the dream? What do you smell, hear, see, or feel in the dream world? What is your embodied experience of the dream?
- How might the dream be showing your current situation in symbolic terms?
- Imagine your dream is a movie. Can you discern key symbolic themes?
- Does your dream contain any relatively fixed symbols such as a tree, the ocean, a cave, or fire?
- Are there images in your dream that might benefit from the use of a symbol dictionary?

The Dream Maker Offers a Fresh Outlook

The dream maker offers its wisdom to guide us toward individuation, creating dreams that bring new information and perspectives. Therefore, dreams will usually tell us something we don't already know. Dreams *contradict*, *complement*, or *confirm* the conscious attitude depending on the degree of distance between consciousness and the unconscious. Imagine placing your fingertips on a mirror. It will appear that the fingers in the mirror are touching your fingers. If you draw your hand away slightly, the hand in the mirror draws away the same distance. Similarly, if your attitude is a little off, the dream will present a compensatory image with a mild feeling tone. But if your conscious attitude is quite one-sided—if the hand is far from the mirror—the dream maker will exert a more forceful pull. In

the biker dream, the dream maker used a striking image of aggression to contradict the dreamer's docility.

Contradictory Dreams

Your dream maker's opposition to your conscious attitude can be unpleasant—and is presented in your best interest. Contradictory dreams challenge our comfortable but faulty self-perceptions, as in this man's dream:

Finger Food

I was at a family barbeque. We were eating ribs the way Jake makes them, smoked slowly over low heat. Then I realized I was eating everything with my hands—potato salad and other stuff that isn't "finger food." People noticed and I was embarrassed.

The dream contradicts the dreamer's conscious image of himself. Sophistication and status were important to this dreamer. He didn't like to acknowledge his tendency to overdo it and saw this quality projected onto his libertine cousin, Jake. Jake valued physical pleasures and had a belly to prove it. Though the dreamer consciously looked down on Jake, he was drinking too much and a part of him knew it. The dream maker reminds the dreamer that he is not as far away from overindulgence as he would like to think.

In their most dramatic form, dreams that contradict the conscious attitude can create feelings of terror or dread. A married woman who was developing an intense friendship with another man dreamed the following:

Collapsing House

We moved into a huge old house. We were going to bed when I noticed a leak dripping down the wall onto the floor. I told my husband, and he started to check on it while I went downstairs, where I discovered the leak was destroying the ceiling and walls of an enormous living room. The kids saw it and started complaining that they wished we hadn't moved here. I wondered if they were right. We had made the decision

hastily and hadn't visited the new house before buying it. The photos hadn't shown all the damage and poor materials. The more I looked around, the more I saw holes in walls, doors, and windows; there were cracked tiles and broken appliances. All the furniture had come with the house, and it was ostentatious and awful. I felt overwhelmed, wondering how we would remove it all, fix the damage, and be comfortable. I walked from one enormous room to the next and found the realtor—a beautiful, cold, and robotic blonde woman. She said there was a small chance we could get out of buying the house, but our old house was gone forever. Security guards came in, an alarm went off, and they accused me of breaking in. I explained my situation and kept walking through the house. I discovered more rooms I didn't know existed. A huge storm was brewing outside. Dark clouds gathered and the wind picked up. In each room there were more and more people, but I didn't know why they were there. A boy sat in the hall throwing rocks at the wall—then at me. As I tried to escape him, walls were cracking and crumbling. I was desperate to find my husband and kids, but the house was collapsing as the storm became more intense. I woke up sweating and afraid.

This woman had often dreamed of being in a big house where she delighted in discovering new rooms, but this dream house was nightmarish. The dream ego had made an impulsive decision, landing her and her family in a damaged, chaotic home. The dream maker's detailed imagery adds up to stern commentary on the danger of her waking attitude toward her burgeoning liaison: this new psychic structure is disastrous! The dreamer realized her exciting friendship might be at the cost of losing her relational "home" of family stability and comfort.

Complementary Dream

More often, dreams complement the conscious attitude by adding what's missing or taking an unexpected stance toward the dream situation. Your conscious attitude may not be wrong, but you might be missing something. Your dream maker fills in gaps in awareness or adjusts your attitude. The feeling tone is generally milder than in contradictory dreams. Complementary dreams may seem less challenging, and we are often tempted to discount them. On a closer look, they can present an invitation to

find a surprising new attitude. A forty-five-year-old woman with a high-pressure job and two middle-school-aged children had the following dream:

Sunny France

I'm in France. It's sunny and warm, and there is a sense of beautiful countryside. I am with people I don't know. They are all French and don't speak English. A woman with dark, curly hair smiles at me and begins speaking to me in French. She tells me that I remember how to speak the language and encourages me to do so.

The dreamer had studied French in college and had enjoyed spending time in France. She found the French language pleasurable and musical, though it had no useful application and she made frequent errors when she spoke it. French reminded her of an earlier, carefree phase of life when she was able to explore and pursue enjoyment. During a time when she was burdened with practical concerns and work obligations, the dream recommended that she recapture this earlier attitude—an openness to pleasure and the simple delight of learning.

Another dreamer was preoccupied by conflict with a close friend and wondered whether to confront her in anger. Then she had the following dream:

Tooth Pain

I am with a simple, uneducated man. He has terrible tooth pain and is in agony.

The dreamer was angry, hurt, and defensive. She thought of her friend as a strong, sophisticated person who had wronged her. When she considered her friend might be in pain like the dream figure, her attitude shifted. The dream oriented the dreamer to a suffering and primitive part of herself and her friend, indicating that both had been acting out of their hurt and less developed places in their conflict. This softened her attitude toward her friend, evoked empathy, and allowed for a gentle repair.

Confirming Dream

Dreams that confirm the conscious attitude are less common. When confirming dreams arrive, they often feel like a gift and have a strong, positive tone we intuitively trust. A previously stay-at-home mother newly engaging in a career had the following dream:

The Gold Ring

I'm in a sunny place. There is a circle of people. I am standing slightly to the side. A man has a fishbowl full of thousands of small, folded slips of paper. He puts his hand in the bowl and pulls one out, and I know immediately that it will be mine. He pulls out a paper and reads the number 4D. It is my number. I step forward. Another man had a clear container filled with mud and sludge. He is pouring it into my hand. A large, golden ring falls into my cupped hands among the mud.

As her children grew older, this woman stepped into work as an artist, an ambition she had hesitated to embrace. She began to make space for her art: she took classes, rented a studio, and sold some paintings. Like the waking ego, the dream ego steps forward and is rewarded. She doesn't pull her hands away from the mud and sludge but is receptive to what is offered. She is on the path to her golden destiny—plus a dollop of the gloppy mud from which things grow. A crucial symbol in this dream is the number four plus *D*, the fourth letter of the alphabet. For Jung, four represents structural wholeness (buildings, city blocks, gardens are usually squared; there are four directions, four seasons, four suits of cards). All the elements in this dream are in accord.

Key: Dreams contradict, complement, or confirm the conscious attitude.

Dreams usually tell us something we don't already know. Imagine the dream is an email from the dream maker about a particular life situation. Then consider these questions:

- What new information is the dream maker bringing?

- Does the dream maker seem to be expressing a strong opposition to the conscious attitude?
- Is the dream maker adding a perspective you have disregarded or overlooked?
- Does the dream maker seem to be cheering you on?
- Apply the dream to your life by asking yourself what conscious attitude the dream might be correcting, contradicting, or confirming. Why did the dream maker send you this dream now?

The Dream Ego Is Probably Wrong

One of the problems in understanding our dreams is that communication from the dream maker tends to be critical. When our dream ego—the "I" in the dream—feels contradicted or corrected, our initial response tends to be defensive. But the least trustworthy attitude in a dream is often that of your dream ego. We owe this succinct formulation to Jungian analyst Patricia Berry. She drew on the work of John Layard, who worked and studied with Jung. Layard's rule is that nothing in the dream is wrong, except perhaps the dream ego.[6] We are likely to have a blind spot as to how our conscious attitude is off base. It is the dream maker's job to let us know where we are off-balance or have missed something that matters. The element that opposes your dream ego, from bikers to horrendous houses, is simply providing equal and opposite compensation from the unconscious for a faulty ego attitude.

When working with your dream, asking yourself how your dream ego might be wrong is a crucial early step. In the biker dream, the dreamer first aligned with the dream ego: bikers were bad and had to be battled. When the dreamer could consider that the besieged reaction of the "I" in the dream might have been mistaken, he was able to ponder the positive potentials represented by the bikers. Here is another dream illustrating the ego's tendency to take a one-sided stance:

Gold Watch

I'm holding my gold watch and I notice that one of the tiny screws has come out. While I try to find it, several other pieces of the watch fall off, and I realize I will need to take it to a watchmaker. There are two old men who fix watches. They have set up their shop in a hotel room. They are irascible and taciturn. They look at the watch and tell me that it's a cheap movement and not worth fixing. I point out that the case is made of gold. They tell me that it's just gold plate. I point out to them the 14-karat stamp, but they tell me that is only true of a small part. Most of it is just gold plate. They hand me my watch back in many pieces. The crystal is cracked, and it wasn't before I brought it in. I complain to them that they cracked the crystal, but they insist I gave it to them like that. I am leaving with it in a plastic bag, upset that my watch is in pieces and that they don't understand its value.

The dreamer was a man going through a midlife transition and anticipating retirement. After a long career, he felt burnt out and disillusioned. The gold watch had been his first significant purchase, made when he graduated from college with money received from his grandparents. It exemplified values associated with the first half of life—the recognition of academic and professional achievement in the outer world. The dream ego feels angry and misunderstood by the two watchmakers who don't value his treasure. They oppose the dream ego's attitude, and upon awakening, the dreamer felt sure that they were wrong. However, what happens if we assume their attitude might be more correct? The irascible watchmakers provide the medicine of the dream: The values that once directed the dreamer's life course are now worthless. Something else is needed.

Of course, your dream ego's perspective is not always wrong. Sometimes its attitude is full of insight, though this tends to happen more when we have spent years working with our dreams. It is common, however, for the dream ego's attitude to be just a little off, as in the following dream of a twenty-nine-year-old married woman:

Bad Boy

I'm hanging out with my college boyfriend, Ken, who treated me cruelly when we dated. I feel embarrassed being seen with him because I know my friends will wonder why I am with him since he's clearly not good for me. My husband is there, and he says that Ken is a big loser.

The dream ego's attitude is not wrong, but it is slightly off—she knows it is not good for her to be with Ken and is embarrassed but she's doing it anyway. The dreamer connected this dream image to her job where she was allowing herself to be taken advantage of. The dream husband provides the needed correction by calling it like it is.

Usually, consciousness automatically pastes its orientation onto the unconscious. If, in waking life, a bunch of bikers came roaring up to your house at night, of course you'd call the police. You'd be annoyed if you took a gold watch in for repair and it was returned to you in pieces. When someone attacks or questions us in waking life, our alarm system goes off and our defenses turn on. But Jung advises us to presume that dream figures in opposition to the dream ego have something valuable to convey to consciousness. "One often has dreams which seem destructive and evil, the thing one cannot accept," Jung explains, "but it is merely due to the fact that one's conscious attitude is wrong."[7] The resulting reorientation is sometimes enough to unlock an "Aha!" that lets us know we have received the dream's teaching.

Key: The dream ego's attitude is likely to be wrong.

Although we tend to align with the perspective of the dream ego as we consider our dreams, it's most often the case that the assumptions, feelings, and attitudes of the dream ego are off base. Trying out this assumption with every dream is a good place to start. Consider the following questions:

- What if the attitude of your dream ego is incorrect?
- What if dream elements that seem bad or challenging are in fact bringing something valuable?

- What if you assumed that anything your dream ego finds "wrong" is actually helpful in some regard?

Journaling Prompt

Pretend that you are the element in the dream that opposes your dream ego—the bikers or the watchmakers, for example. What is your perspective on the situation? What do you have to say?

In Here or Out There?

Dreams mostly tell us about ourselves. Even when they do address people and events in the outer world, they are likely to point out how we are in relation to them. We tend to see problems as if they are about external people and situations, but the dream maker is almost always directing our attention inward. It uses people and events in the outer world to show us our mental state and invite us to understand something about ourselves.

> One should never forget that one dreams in the first place, and almost to the exclusion of all else, of oneself.
>
> —C. G. JUNG

Inner World

As a starting point, we assume that every element in a dream depicts an aspect of our own psyche. Jung referred to this as the "subjective" level of interpretation. "The 'other' person we dream of is not our friend and neighbour, but the other in us," according to Jung.[8] If we dream of our college roommate years after graduation, the dream maker is probably not trying to tell us something about him or her. It has selected this person from our experience like a stage manager chooses a prop. The roommate reflects a characteristic of you, the dreamer. Similarly, when our dreams feature public figures, people we don't know well, or people we've lost touch with, we can assume that the dream is commenting on the inner world. If a dream features someone we're close to who appears significantly different from how he or she is in waking life, it also is likely about our interior. For

example, when a man dreamed that his attractive wife looked old and sick, she served as an image of an inner dynamic. A mother and teacher with grown children had the following dream:

Infertility

My younger sister, Fiona, has been to the fertility doctor and learned that she has no viable eggs left. She will never have children. I am saddened to hear this. Surely there is something they can do! I hear her sobbing. I know she will need to grieve, and I will need to grieve with her.

The dreamer's younger sister, Fiona, had been treated for infertility and later conceived two children. It's therefore unlikely that the dream is commenting on her. Rather, Fiona represents a part of the dreamer that must come to terms with dashed hopes and unrealized expectations. The sister reminded the dreamer of her daughter, who had dropped out of college. The dreamer was coming to understand that she might need to mourn certain conventional hopes and wishes related to her daughter. The dream ego initially resists the necessity of adjusting expectations ("Surely there is something they can do!"), but the mourning begins in the inner world—Fiona is sobbing. Then the dream ego can also acknowledge the loss and the need to grieve. The dream wasn't about the sister or even the dreamer's daughter. Rather, it was about the dreamer's inner Fiona, a part of her that was hoping for new life but now must mourn. The dream reflected the process of coming to terms with hopes that were likely never to be.

> The dream is a living thing, by no means a dead thing that rustles like dry paper. It is a living situation.
>
> —C. G. Jung

Outer World

Sometimes dreams do comment on the outer world. These dreams may alert us to dynamics with important people in our waking lives. Jung called this an "objective" interpretation. If you have a dream featuring someone you are close to in daily life, and this person is portrayed accurately, the dream

may be commenting on your relationship in the outer world. This woman's dream is an example:

Driving Blind

My husband and I are in the car. He is driving but is wearing the wrong glasses and can't see well. It appears that this is a dangerous situation, but I don't say anything because I don't want to upset him.

The dreamer noted that her husband looked as he did in waking life and that he usually did the driving. It therefore made sense to consider a possible reference to her outer-world husband. The dreamer realized she had allowed her husband to make many decisions, some of which were ill-considered. The dream maker had delivered a double-barreled message: her husband didn't see things clearly, and the dreamer had a dangerously passive attitude.

As with everything regarding dreams, the categories our waking minds create are seldom crisp. A dream can be valid on both the subjective, or inner level, and the objective, or outer level.

Key: Dreams are usually about the inner world.

Determining whether the dream is about the inner or the outer world helps us orient to the dream's meaning. In weighing which to choose, the following questions are helpful:

- Does the dream feature unknown people or people peripheral to your life?
- Does the dream feature someone well known to you who appears dramatically different? (Perhaps the dream figure is older or younger, behaves bizarrely, or has unfamiliar features.)
- If the answers to these questions are yes, the dream is most likely commenting on the inner world. In this case, you should assume that all dream elements are images of aspects of your own psyche.

However,

- Does the dream feature a close friend, colleague, or family member with whom you interact in daily life?
- If so, does the dream figure appear and behave realistically?
- Intimates that are accurately portrayed in the dream may alert you to unrecognized outer-world relational dynamics.

Applying the Dream to Your Life

The dream maker attends to your waking-life affairs with keen interest and has something to say about them. Therefore, most dreams will comment on outer-life concerns that the dream maker deems significant. Note that the dream maker's ideas about what's important may differ from yours! Sometimes, what you've been fretting about consciously doesn't interest the dream maker, who is always concerned with the wider project of individuation. If you can't get a sense of how the dream might apply, take a moment to reflect on recent challenges. Ask yourself what has been taking up space in your thoughts over the past day or two. Dreams will often comment on bothersome issues we've relegated to the background. Perhaps consciously you've been focused on a deadline at work, but in moments of downtime, your thoughts have gravitated to an uneasy feeling that you and your partner are drifting. Could the dream be addressing your relationship concerns?

Key: Reflect on how the dream images might be related to current life concerns.

Does the dream relate to conscious preoccupations? If not, consider the following questions:

- Why are you having *this* dream *now*?
- What occupied your thoughts in the day or two before you had the dream?

- What unanswered questions have you been holding, perhaps just out of conscious awareness?
- Were there any occurrences the day or two before the dream that left you feeling unsettled?
- Is it possible that the dream addressed some of these concerns?

Conversations with the Dream Maker

As you pay attention to your dreams, you will get to know your dream maker. Dreamwork will start to feel like an ongoing conversation between your waking self and your intimate, inner other. You'll develop a shared language of motifs and symbols, and like a private joke between close companions, you'll recognize familiar references.

Recurring dreams are the dream maker's attempts to call our attention to something that matters. If we haven't been listening, the dream maker repeats the message, sometimes with little variation. If we can do the work of understanding recurring dreams, they tend to stop. People often dream of being chased, perhaps initially by something unknown but monstrous. Working with the dream—recording and associating to it—may shift the image of the pursuer to something more defined and less terrifying. With ongoing attention, your dream ego may turn to face its pursuer, learn what it wants, and find that it isn't monstrous at all.

Dream themes develop and change over time, allowing us to notice psychological trends. Keeping a dream journal regularly allows us to track inner movement. As you begin this work, take note of your attitude toward the dream maker. How do you feel about it? Are you curious? Does it scare you? Do you tend to dismiss it? In today's outwardly oriented world, nonrational sources of wisdom like dreams are often devalued. Conversely, we can overvalue our dreams and intuitions as mystical revelations beyond doubt. Dreamwork is the ongoing effort to create dialogue between the unconscious and consciousness. Each side must hold its own if new understanding is to take place.

The dream maker is your unwavering inner companion, and it is in the service of your individuation, the heart of Jungian work. By turning toward the dream maker and endeavoring to learn its language, you will be forging

a conscious relationship with this larger part of yourself. May your conversations together be rich and full of heart.

3

Dream Images

Association, Explanation, and Amplification

I work all around the dream picture and disregard every attempt that the dreamer makes to break away from it. Time and time again, in my professional work, I have had to repeat the words: "Let's get back to your dream. What does the dream *say?"*

—C. G. Jung

Working with dreams presents a significant challenge: we must distance ourselves from our waking, conscious attitude to inhabit the radically different perspective presented by the dream maker. This is not easy to do. "So difficult is it to understand a dream," Jung wrote, "that for a long time I have made it a rule, when someone tells me a dream and asks for my opinion, to say first of all to myself: 'I have no idea what this dream means.' After that I can begin to examine the dream."[1] Starting off an interpretation with "beginner's mind" in this way helps to cultivate necessary openness and freedom from the constraints of familiar frameworks. Making friends with the dream maker as explored in the previous chapter helps. Once we've done this, what do we do next?

Three Levels

Since dreams usually feature a combination of people, places, and things, we'll begin there. Each of these elements was chosen by the dream maker, and exploring personal thoughts, memories, and feelings about specific dream components can help us understand their symbolic significance. In addition, some dream images—let's say flashlight, office, shoe—benefit from stepping into explanation and factual function. Lastly, some dreams contain universally meaningful images, such as tree, wheel, or fire. Such images require us to look for parallels in religion, art, myth, and fairy tales.

This adds up to three levels of meaning to plumb when considering a dream component: *personal associations*, *factual explanations*, and *archetypal amplifications*. A personal association is just what it sounds like—individual experience, memory, and feeling connected to a dream image, such as a dog. Such associations can range from fond memories of a childhood pet to dog-related trauma. A factual explanation provides description and function: a dog is a four-legged, domesticated animal commonly kept as a pet, guard, or hunting partner. Archetypal amplification is Jung's method of applying mythic, cultural, and symbolic similarities to universal human images. Cerberus, a three-headed dog, guarded the gates of hell; and in ancient Egypt, the dog-headed god Anubis ruled over mummification and the afterlife.

Although these categories aren't always distinct, they provide a useful conceptual and procedural framework, and it's best to consider them in order. Any dream element may have all three levels, like dog, or they may overlap: personal associations often evoke explanation and function, and explanations can point to archetypal foundations. It's important, however, to identify and stick with the level you are working on until you move to the next, and consider all three levels so as not to overlook a possible source of meaning.

Throughout this chapter we'll use the following dream to illustrate applying personal associations, factual explanations, and archetypal amplifications. This will help us understand how each level can open layers of meaning in a single dream. The dreamer is a woman in midlife.

Silk Dresses

I am in a store with my sister. There are beautiful dresses made of brightly colored silk. We are trying them on. My sister takes all the most beautiful ones for herself, including one that is a brilliant turquoise. I begin feeling sad and desperate. I am getting only the ugly dresses, including one that is patchwork. My sister does not even think about whether she should be taking all the best dresses.

Personal Associations

Most nights our dreams are filled with recognizable images from the past and present—elements of personal experience. Personal associations form the bedrock of any dream interpretation, and gathering them is one of the few keys that should be applied to every dream. The dream maker chose specific images from the dreamer's "library" of people and places, so we need to know more about them to discern their meaning.

According to Jung, we cannot understand a dream correctly until we have examined the dreamer's personal context, feelings, and memories.

> No interpretation can be undertaken without the dreamer. The words composing a dream-narrative have not just *one* meaning, but many meanings. If, for instance, someone dreams of a table, we are still far from knowing what the "table" of the dreamer signifies, although the world "table" sounds unambiguous enough. For the thing we do not know is that this "table" is the very one at which his father sat when he refused the dreamer all further financial help and threw him out of the house as a good-for-nothing. The polished surface of this table stares at him as a symbol of his lamentable worthlessness in his daytime consciousness as well as in his dreams at night. This is what our dreamer understands by "table." Therefore, we need the dreamer's help in order to limit the multiple meanings of words to those that are essential and convincing.[2]

Personal associations are critical if we are to understand the symbolic value of dream components and their relationship to the dreamer's life history. We may have personal associations to any dream image, including those that seem bizarre or unlikely, such as spaceships or breathing underwater. We should examine each person, place, and particularity in a dream to explore the associations with it. **However, personal associations are especially critical for dream images connected to aspects of individual history.** If you dream of your childhood home, your backpack, or the ring your grandfather gave you, such images are best understood by focusing on what they mean *to you*.

Begin by making a list of key dream elements. Then write down memories, feelings, and associations that help you pinpoint the element's essence. In general, associations ought to be brief and can usually be

summed up in a few sentences that capture the essential nature of the person or thing. Stay close to the dream image, build on its unique qualities, and look for emotional resonance and meaning. Recalling many memories or searching for exhaustive references is likely to lead you away from the main, emotion-laden image. In the "Silk Dresses" dream, the key elements are *store*, *sister*, *silk dresses*, *turquoise*, and *patchwork dress*. The element associated with the dreamer's personal history is *sister*, so associations will be critical here.

When tracking personal associations, focus on the feelings associated with the image. "My sister is three years younger than I am" falls flat because it's only a fact. Two or three sentences oriented to feeling usually suffice and are readily accessible, as in this dreamer's association: "My sister is very concerned with appearance and often demands to be the center of attention. I always played second fiddle to her—she even stole the show at my wedding." The dreamer's associations to her sister evoke emotion. The meaning of the dream image will be authentic only when feeling connections emerge, so be patient in finding associations with resonance.

People

When tracking associations to friends or acquaintances, try describing their essential nature. Make a note of key memories and feelings. It is often helpful to ask yourself, how am I like this person? And how am I different? Unknown or featureless people often turn up in our dreams. Even though such images are often vague, we can still look for associations. Recall whatever details you can about such people. Note whether a subtle feeling is evoked. Do they remind you of anyone? If so, what are your associations to that person? Is the unknown person in your dream tall? Does he have red hair? What are your reactions to such traits? What does your imagination tell you about this person? Asking yourself such questions can sometimes elicit useful information that can further your understanding of the dream.

Celebrities

Celebrities often appear in dreams—musicians, movie stars, and moguls—and are a special category that benefits from association. The most helpful associations are usually related to the person's artistry rather than biography. If Meryl Streep is featured in a dream, start by asking yourself

what film role you most associate with her. Is it the heartbreaking Sophie Zawistowski from *Sophie's Choice*? The poignant Francesca Johnson from *The Bridges of Madison County*? Or the outrageous Donna Sheridan in *Mamma Mia!*? If you dream of Taylor Swift or Beyoncé, which song comes to mind most powerfully? These recollections are a good place to start when exploring the image.

Day Residue

Often dreams are filled with images culled from recent experiences. The setting or characters are those from the movie we watched before we went to bed or remind us of the store we were in yesterday. Freud called the memory traces that show up in dreams "day residue." Recent recollections are often fresh, clear, and may carry an emotional charge, but the dream maker uses them just like any other prop to create its symbolic message. You can mine these images for personal associations to understand why the dream maker chose them. People new to dreamwork sometimes dismiss day-residue images because they assume that they already understand them. It might seem that scenes from yesterday's true-crime TV show appeared in your dreams simply because they were on your mind shortly before bedtime, but remember that the dream maker is always speaking to us in metaphor. Try applying a symbolic understanding to these images rather than assuming their meaning is obvious. Gather associations, note your feelings about them, and pay attention to how they relate to important life themes you might be struggling with. For example, a man had the following dream after watching a documentary about a newly discovered species of ancient hominid:

Homo Naledi

Groups of *Homo naledi* were immigrating to the United States, but no one wanted them here. It was like a refugee problem.

Upon awakening, the dreamer was amused that the prehistoric hominids had managed to migrate from the documentary into his dream, and he was tempted to dismiss it because it seemed easy to explain as a mere artifact of the show he had watched before bedtime. However, a symbolic exploration

of the dream invited him to wonder about the ancient, seemingly long-extinct parts of his psyche that were now seeking integration and were not welcomed by consciousness.

Applying Personal Association

Dreams comment on our current life, inner and outer. Therefore, when gathering personal associations, ask yourself how they relate to a current life situation. Where is this dynamic occurring now? How are you behaving like that? What about this person might represent a disowned part of you? Jung once had a dream about a lawyer who was an unimportant but puffed-up figure from his long-ago student days. Jung puzzled over this person's surprising appearance in a dream and finally realized that he was behaving in a legalistic, self-righteous fashion—like that lawyer—toward someone in his outer life. Discovering his "inner lawyer" let Jung be aware of his disdainful attitude.

> Dreams give information about the secrets of the inner life and reveal to the dreamer hidden factors of his personality. As long as these are undiscovered, they disturb his waking life and betray themselves only in the form of symptoms.
>
> —C. G. Jung

In the "Silk Dresses" dream, the dreamer might wonder where in her life she feels ignored and taken advantage of—*and* where she acts like her sister, in a domineering and entitled manner. This dream might be commenting on her outer life—a dynamic with her sister. But it is also likely to be raising a truth about the inner world—an unacknowledged aspect of herself that is like her sister. Consciously, the dreamer avoided the limelight and felt anxious when attracting attention to herself, but the dream let her know there is an inner sister who craves it. Does the relational dynamic between the two dream sisters depict an internal conflict between being inconspicuous and desiring center stage? Sticking with the associative process can allow a "click" to surface that evokes emotional resonance. It may be flavored with a certain amount of chagrin, but don't be discouraged. Because dreams often come as a corrective to our conscious attitude,

feelings of embarrassment that come up as we work with the dream usually mean that we have received the dream's medicine.

Often, personal association will be the key that unlocks meaning. One dreamer was baffled when her dream included a grade-school friend she hadn't thought about in many years.

Mother Is Ill

I'm wandering around a shopping mall. I am with Nancy. Then I am going to visit my mother, only she is in a hospital. I must go down many corridors to find her and keep getting lost. Finally, I reach her room. She is in a hospital bed, hooked up to all kinds of medical machinery. I am horrified at how ill and wasted she looks.

The dream's powerful emotional content startled the dreamer. As she explored it, the appearance of Nancy, a grade-school acquaintance, continued to perplex her. In combing through her associations, the dreamer recalled that Nancy's father had had a heart attack when they were in the fourth grade, the dreamer's first encounter with the serious illness or death of a parent. This association alerted the dreamer to the impact of parental illness and demise and helped prepare the dreamer for her mother's nascent dementia.

Key: Always explore personal associations to key elements when beginning to work on a dream.

Personal associations are so important that you should gather them for every dream. They are especially crucial for any dream element that has unique relevance to your life.

- Begin by making a list of people, places, and things in your dream, then note your memories, attitudes, and experiences associated with each one.
- What is the essence of this person or thing?
- What is your primary emotion about this person or thing?

- Is there a decisive memory that you have about this dream element?
- In seeking associations to a friend or acquaintance, ask yourself how are you like this person? And in what way are you different?
- If an unknown person appears in your dream, can you identify any details that might elicit an association? What does your imagination tell you?
- If there is an artist, actor, or musician in your dream, which work of theirs comes to mind?
- Treat day residue in dreams just as you would any other material. What are your associations to these recent events?

Once you have collected your associations, try applying them by making use of the following questions:

- What part of you is like this?
- Where is this dynamic in your life right now?
- How might you be behaving like this?

Explanation

Factual explanation allows us to apply an ordinary definition to dream elements, revealing hidden levels of meaning. Jung didn't specifically mention explanation or its corollary, function, but these are often important to understanding and can be particularly helpful when we lack personal associations to the people and objects in our dreams. When crafting an explanation or describing a function, imagine that you are trying to communicate with a visitor from another planet: a pillow is a soft place to rest your head while lying down to sleep or dream, or a volcano is a mountain topped by a crater through which the earth's core vents vapor or molten lava.[3]

What Is It?

Start by asking this question about any dream element. It may not seem necessary to explain something mundane, but doing so both confines and

enlarges the image. If we dream of a flower, we might be tempted to overlook this step. However, beyond being a thing of beauty often offered in celebration or remembrance, a flower is the organ of sexual reproduction for many plants. The particularities of an object or person can reveal additional levels of significance. A car is a personal conveyance used to move through the world, and a car is different from a bicycle or a bus; you power the bike yourself, and a bus is a collective mode of transportation. If you travel by bus instead of a car, the dream maker made this choice with intention. Taking care to note specifics as you craft your explanation will help pinpoint the dream maker's purpose.

Let's say you dreamed of a bread machine. You would first ask yourself about personal associations: Is this a bread machine you own? Is it significant in some way? Maybe you got it as a wedding present and never used it, or you used it with your kids when they were little. This would help reveal the bread machine's personal significance. But let's assume you don't have any personal associations to bread machines. You've never given them much thought, yet a bread machine shows up in your dream. This is when explanation is especially useful.

Start by asking, what is a bread machine? A bread machine automates the process of bread making; it mixes, kneads, proofs, and bakes bread in a self-contained countertop unit. It's a vessel in which inedible substances—flour, yeast, and liquid—are combined, heated, and transformed into a fragrant, fresh source of sustenance.

These reflections connote a positive understanding of a bread machine, but we could also note that it has replaced a human process requiring touch, skill, and time. Bread making has become automated and impersonal. This leads us to consider its negative aspect. Which predominates will depend in part on the dreamer's emotional response, its relationship to other dream images, and the part it plays in the context of the dream narrative.

Did you notice that working with an explanation for bread machine led us to its mythic root? Bread is the staff of life. A bread machine, an innocuous kitchen appliance, became infused with symbolic meaning. That's because explanations rest on archetypal bedrock and excavating an image down to its foundation often reveals universal motifs. We look beyond the personal and mundane for meaningful universal patterns, the process of archetypal amplification to be discussed later.

What Does It Do?

It can be helpful to consider the real-world function of a person or object in a dream. Physicians practice medicine, judges decide legal cases, and travel agents plan journeys. Knives are used to cut, attics are where we store old things, and perfume makes us smell good. Explaining functions helps bring the dream element's potential meaning into focus. Consider the following dream of a therapist who was using cannabis during her workday:

Police

I am watching as the police remove things from another woman's house—a crying baby, a chenille bedspread, a lamp. They are taking these things because the woman did drugs.

Some part of the dreamer knew it was wrong to provide psychotherapy under the influence of cannabis, but she had rationalized this behavior and was unwilling to consider the consequences. Explanation tells us that police enforce laws. The dreamer's inner psychic police were holding the woman accountable for her drug use, a message from the dream maker that there was a significant cost to her behavior.

A Naturalistic Lens

Applying a naturalistic lens to a dream element is an aspect of explanation that can also help to flesh out understanding. If you dream of a giraffe, take a minute to research giraffes. Find out about their habits. They are the tallest living land animal and the largest ruminant. They have long legs and necks that allow them to eat the leaves of tall trees and a beautiful spotted pattern that provides camouflage. They live in stable social groups and travel together over broad ranges to feed. Even if you didn't know much about giraffes before you had the dream, your dream maker is using the qualities of "giraffe-ness" to symbolize something in your inner world. Exploring the natural qualities of an animal or element can bring insight.

Conversely, discrepancy between how a thing behaves in the natural world and what it does in a dream is a message from the dream maker. If a dream featured a dog that climbed a tree or a car that could fly, you would

know immediately that these images were unlike the essential nature of dogs and the function of automobiles. Noting such differences can clarify the dream's meaning. Consider this dream of a forty-three-year-old woman:

Counterweight

I'm in a pool of water. In front of me, there is a piece of green granite with a circular metal inlay and a ring attached to the circular metal. It resembles the remains of a counterweight like those used to open castle gates. I look at it, and with the power of my stare, I cause the rock to float up to the surface of the water and glide on the surface. It starts skipping on the water.

Starting with explanation, a counterweight is a mechanized system that makes lifting a heavy mass easier by augmenting human strength. A counterweight used to lift a castle door would offset the weight of the gate so less force would be needed to open it. In this dream, the counterweight does not function as it should: the dream ego causes it to float and glide simply by staring at it. When a dream element operates contrary to physics or intended function, it's often referring to a psychological dynamic. We might wonder what "weighty" aspect of the dreamer's psyche has been magically contradicted. The dreamer was avoiding dealing with a "heavy" matter in life by engaging in spiritual practices focused on positivity. Perhaps using the "heavy" life issue as a counterweight would allow the doors to her inner castle to open more easily.

Etymology

Considering the root of a word is an aspect of explanation and can be useful in delving a little deeper into the meaning of an image. For example, the word *automobile* traces its roots through French, Greek, and Latin to *autos mobilis*, which means "moveable self," making cars an image of how we move ourselves around in the world. *Los Angeles* is Spanish for "the angels," and *university* contains within it the word *universe*. Just google a word plus *etymology* and see what additional meaning opens.

Wordplay

Puns and plays on words are a special category of explanation. The unconscious uses language figuratively, and sometimes noting a double entendre can unlock a dream's significance. In the "Silk Dresses" dream, the word *store* can mean "to accumulate or save"; it can also refer to a stock or supply. Has the dreamer stored away her assertiveness and desire for admiration? Secondary definitions of words may offer additional meaning-making possibilities.

A woman dreamed she had taken shelter in a cave and fallen asleep. She awakened to see a panther standing over her. It looked down at her for a long moment with glinting yellow eyes, then left. The dreamer was frozen with fear and entranced by the beauty of the panther's blackness. In waking life this woman was fearful of taking a more authoritative stance in her marriage: panther became pant-her. The dream seemed to be asking *her* to wear the *pant*(s). Another woman dreamed she was stuck on a crossword puzzle. In working with the dream, she realized she was suppressing her "cross words" about a life situation.

Applying Explanation

Explanation can reveal the meaning behind dream objects and people, particularly those for which we lack strong personal associations. Let's return to "Silk Dresses" and note which components might benefit from explanation: *store*, *silk dresses*, *turquoise*, and *patchwork*. After eliciting personal associations, we would construct succinct explanations. A store is a place to buy things, and usually offers a range of items from which to choose. A brightly colored silk dress is a luxury clothing item for women worn on special occasions. Turquoise is a brilliant color named after a semi-precious gemstone known to bring good luck. Patchwork is a fabric technique in which usable pieces of cloth from worn-out garments are used to patch holes in clothing or construct new items, typically quilts.

Once you have arrived at a concise explanation, listen for its metaphoric meaning. A store offers abundance and options, which the dream ego is unable to access. The patchwork dress indicates that the dreamer is worthy only of scraps from worn-out garments—she is clothed in a shabby self-image and can't claim a sense of precious, silken self-worth. We might also wonder if the makings of a new life design are implicit, for patchwork

quilts require creativity and skill. Explanation can facilitate the emergence of underlying values and attitudes.

Key: Explain a dream element using a common definition.

Describing what a dream element is and what it does can reveal the dream maker's metaphorical intent. Consider the following questions:

- Who is this person or what is this object? Describe it as if you were telling an alien from another planet about the person or thing.
- What is the function of this object or person? What role does this person play? What is this object used for?
- Does etymology throw additional light on a word's meaning?
- Do you notice any wordplay or double entendres?
- How might any of these additional shades of meaning contribute to a symbolic understanding of the person or object?
- Why did the dream maker pick this particular person or object? How does this relate to something going on in your life right now?

Archetypal Amplification: Echoes of the Universal

Archetypal amplification, one of Jung's major contributions to dream analysis, broadens our perspective as we consider dream elements. It involves excavating the symbolic root of an image to gain a wider understanding. As Jung said, "The deeper you go, the broader the base becomes."[4] Finding similarities to universal themes in myth, religion, art, or other symbol systems is intrinsic to amplification. Remember the bread machine? It's like the vessel used by the alchemists in which the prima materia, the base raw materials, will be transmuted into the philosopher's stone. When we know that a bread machine belongs to a class of containers in which transformative change occurs, we've engaged in amplification.

Through his comprehensive study of myths, fairy tales, and symbols, Jung discovered universal psychic patterns. He called them archetypes, a

word derived from Greek meaning “first mold” or “original pattern.” Jung likened the archetype to the crystalline structure inherent in a solution. When salt is dissolved in water, it has no crystal structure, but when water evaporates, crystals unique to salt predictably result. Archetypes live in us as if in solution until certain life situations, feelings, or behaviors cause them to crystallize into consciousness. As the dynamic organizing structures of human possibility and psychic life, archetypes produce similar images across cultures.

It’s important to distinguish archetypes from archetypal images. As prototypical psychic structures, archetypes themselves are invisible but act on consciousness to create patterns of human behavior observable in ritual, myth, and art. Archetypes are bipolar—they have a light side and a dark side. For example, the positive aspect of the mother archetype shows up as the Inca earth goddess Pachamama, Holy Mother Mary, or Isis, the Egyptian goddess of healing. The archetypal negative mother is imaged as the Indian goddess Kali, Medusa, or the witch.

Archetypal images in dreams connect our personal lives with the universal substrate that undergirds our existence, reminding us that we are part of an ordered, larger whole. Such images are important signposts on our journey of individuation, pointing us toward the central fire and beckoning us to participate in our own unfolding. In dreams, archetypal images appear in two main ways. The first is as “big dreams,” in which nonpersonal power is unmistakably and impactfully experienced (see Brynn’s dream in the introduction). Big dreams can shake us to the core with the discovery that our personal story is part of a greater narrative, and such experiences can create life change: a woman who dreamed that a bird flew into her heart was inspired to pursue clerical studies.

More commonly, however, archetypal referents are subtly embedded in everyday dreams, as with the image of a bread machine. In this case, more fully understanding the dream comes through identifying its archetypal root. Such resonances abound, often cloaked in the ordinary, for the rhythms and realities of the archetypal world pervade human experience. Amplification allows us to realize that the ego is relative to a greater whole and leads us to transpersonal connection.

When working with a dream, consider whether any of the elements might lend themselves to archetypal amplification. Supernatural imagery often

calls for this approach. Later, we'll discuss other situations where an archetypal reading might be helpful, including dreams where there are few personal associations or dreams that inspire feelings of profound awe. Keep in mind for now that ordinary dream images can reference mythic themes. Being kidnapped may recall Persephone's abduction by Hades; flying in an airplane conjures links with mythical highflyers like Bellerophon, who tamed Pegasus, or Phaethon, who drove his sun-god father's chariot across the sky to his ruin. Animals appear frequently in dreams and almost always have archetypal significance. A spirit of curiosity and playfulness—and symbol dictionaries—will serve you well as you look for archetypal images.

Applying Archetypal Amplification

An archetypal understanding of a dream enriches and deepens meaning by recognizing the larger context to which a dream image or action belongs. Amplification draws on mythological themes and images, so it helps to familiarize yourself with at least one mythological tradition, read or reread fairy tales, and spend time with religious symbols and artistic images. Although no one's inner "reference library" will be as vast as Jung's, we have something Jung lacked: the internet! And as previously mentioned, symbol dictionaries are an invaluable resource. They relate images to their archetypal roots, offering mythological, literary, and religious references for many motifs. A symbol dictionary doesn't pin the meaning of an image down but opens it up. (See the resources section at the back of the book for some of our favorites.) The more we can relate dream content to archetypal images, the better we can recognize mythic leitmotifs.

Let's apply amplification to the "Silk Dresses" dream. Sometimes a dream echoes a myth or fairy tale. Enduring narrative motifs rest on archaic psychic patterns, so the dream maker knows them well, and a dream can be like a familiar story. In this dream, did one sister acquiring beautiful dresses while the other gets only patchwork remind you of "Cinderella"?

Cinderella's haughty stepsisters are demeaning, like the sister in the dream. Is Cinderella trapped in her lowly life or can she claim worthiness and access agency by attending the royal ball? This tale can help the dreamer place her experience in a time-honored, encouraging context. In waking life, the dreamer felt burdened by an inner injunction to be modest. The dreamer rarely asserted herself or took center stage. Her sense of

deservedness had been banished to the unconscious, manifested in the dream as the domineering sister—exactly how the dreamer treated herself by quashing her desire to feel special, beautiful, and admired. The dream challenged the dreamer to integrate some of her dream sister's entitlement and live it consciously, just as Cinderella did when she went to the ball.

Dreams with No Personal Associations

When a dream offers few possibilities for personal associations and explanation provides little additional information, archetypal amplification can open critical understanding. For dreams like the following, archetypal amplification is an essential tool.

Fiery Horses

I am with a group of people on the way somewhere. I stop to talk to a man and the group goes on without me. There are horses running around in a big circle, all black horses with fire coming out of their chests or sides as they run. I'm fascinated. There is real momentum to the running, and they seem to be in a small valley or land that is meant for them. I get slightly in their way, but they keep running and somehow avoid me or I avoid them. I see that there's another valley with horses running around, black, with fire.

The dreamer had recently ended a significant relationship and was feeling lost and alone. The dream depicts being isolated and cut off, but in this state she has an otherworldly encounter. Since horses with fiery chests are not natural, we immediately intuit that meaning lies in the archetypal realm. Fire Horses can emerge only from mythos, the wellspring of archetypal images appearing in age-old stories and symbols of people everywhere. Fiery horses are a sign in Chinese astrology; the biblical book of Revelation references horses with fire, smoke, and sulfur coming out of their mouths; and in Greek mythology, the chariot of the sun god Helios was pulled by fiery horses. It is not necessary to uncover all the references to magical horses to unlock the major mythic theme: fiery horses are associated with extraordinary energy and power.

Dream Animals—Wildlife Within

Dream animals are special and deserve a mention of their own. As in myth, religion, and fairy tale, animals abound in dreams, from pets to mythical beasts to hybrids such as Ganesh, the Hindu god with a human body and an elephant's head. Snakes, dogs, horses, and cats frequently appear in dreams, and although associations are likely to be abundant, we recognize the vivid difference in animal depictions of our instinctual aspects. We even intuit the distinction between butterfly and moth.

Animal representations are emotionally evocative: a forlorn kitten, an antlered stag—or a twenty-foot-long snake. (Count on it: sooner or later almost everyone has a "snake dream.") When animals visit our dreams, feeling is heightened. Animals also connect us with physical sensation: bones under fur, a bird's sharp beak, or iridescent scales flashing below the surface. Animals connect us with parts of ourselves we may never have known, have forgotten, or fear—but encounters with inner animals are compelling and have sacred significance.

Marie-Louise von Franz, one of Jung's closest collaborators, studied fairy tales from around the world. She said the only universal theme she discovered was that talking animals should be heeded—and so we must answer the call to attune to the animals who populate our dreams. Whether they appear as fearsome or friendly, familiar or foreign, they have something important to say, for they voice both personal shadow and the deeper wisdom of instinctual life: even a Persian cat will display her predatory predilections if a bird flutters by. The cat that appears in your dream is both unique and a member of the large and ancient category of cats: sacred cats, wild cats, domestic cats, and fantasy cats. Animals are the great connectors of personal and collective, amplifying individual experience with archetypal symbolism.

An Experience of Awe

Archetypal references have a specific effect on consciousness. As underlying potentials arise, giving form and meaning to experience, they evoke a feeling of transcendent significance. "I have found that . . . when 'archetypal' contents spontaneously appear in dream," wrote Jung,

"numinous and healing effects emanate from them. They are *primordial psychic experiences* which very often give patients access again to blocked religious truths."[5] Jung used the word *numinous* to describe experiences filled with awe and sublime otherness. A powerful emotional reaction to a dream image often signals an archetypal encounter. When a dream inspires such a reaction, archetypal amplification is likely to hold the key to understanding.

The Whale

I am in a rowboat in the open ocean. Suddenly a whale emerges from the depths close to my boat. I am looking into the whale's eye and it seems full of immense but alien wisdom. I know that it can upset my boat and fling me into the water. I am filled with awe.

This dream came when the dreamer was experiencing a crisis of self-doubt. The feeling of archaic presence and intensity was numinous. The dreamer was struck by the tremendous emotional impact of this dream, and an exploration of mythological references deepened its significance. Whales are massive denizens of the ocean—the vast unconscious—and such encounters are deific. Moby Dick vanquished all but one of the crew hunting him; Jonah was swallowed by a whale and emerged transformed. In the book of Job, God compares himself with Leviathan, a sea creature of overwhelming size and force, like a whale: "No one is so fierce as to dare to stir it up. Who can stand before it? Who can confront it and be safe—under the whole heaven, who?"[6]

The whale is related to death and rebirth, and to the inscrutable experience of the divine: the whale is king of mysterious depths, and the dreamer bows to its power. The dream provides a fully felt experience of being in relationship to something infinitely larger. Whale is a representation of the nature of the relationship between our conscious selves and the guiding center of the personality that Jung called "the Self"—or between us and God. This kind of dream is an experience that transcends interpretation.

> When somebody reaches the archetype in a dream, he has, so to speak, found the treasure, the key with which the closed door can then be opened, or a magic with which the dangerous situation can be exorcized. This fact was already known to the ancients in prehistoric times.
>
> —C. G. Jung

It can be exciting to recognize a mythic motif in a dream, and it's tempting to jump into amplification at the outset. But leaving out personal associations can derail the quest for understanding. We learned a lesson about this in Jungian training. Joseph, Deb, and Lisa were in a case seminar, and a client dream featuring bees was presented. Several people dived immediately into archetypal symbolism, highlighting references to bees and honey in myths and fairy tales. The presenter then shared the dreamer's life-threatening allergy to beestings.

Our interpretation would have been utterly off base without this vital personal association. Archetypal aspects of bees could well have deepened the dream image—personal and archetypal meanings are not mutually exclusive. Even contradictory meanings can be true, for ambivalence and paradox have a place in dreams. But the personal *must* take precedence, as the dream's meaning is grounded in the individual.

Key: Amplify archetypal images using universal images.

Archetypal amplification allows us to find resonance between our dreams and primordial, universal images. Amplification should not take precedence over personal associations, but it can be particularly relevant in those cases without connections or memories related to the dream content. To use the archetypal amplification key, consider the following questions:

- Is your dream full of overwhelming emotion and numinosity? If so, consider whether it is a big dream, one that is born from the realm of the archetypes.

- Are there magical elements in the dream—things that couldn't happen in real life? These are likely archetypal images. You may want to consult a symbol dictionary or the internet to find out more.
- Does your dream call to mind a myth or fairy tale? Familiarizing yourself with such stories can be helpful.
- What is the mythic taproot of the "ordinary" elements? How might understanding these expand the dream's meaning?

Putting It All Together

Now let's put this chapter's keys to use in unlocking the meaning of some dreams: personal association, factual explanation, and archetypal amplification.

A woman in midlife dreamed:

Dead Deer

I am on my way to a convenience store on the edge of town at night. I realize someone is following me and I am alarmed. I walk faster and am relieved to see the store's lights ahead. My stalker's footsteps also quicken, and I start running, but he is catching up with me. Suddenly I turn and shoot him and then see that instead of a man, a deer is lying in the road! I am stricken with horror and remorse.

Association & Explanation: The dreamer, who lived in a city, associated being stalked to a recent experience of taking a shortcut along a dark side street instead of one that was well lit. No one had accosted her, but she had felt vulnerable and scared. A convenience store is a retail business that sells sundries and snacks and remains open late in the evening. The glass storefront allowed a lot of light to shine through and promised safety. We might also consider the multiple connotations of *shortcut* and *convenience*. Where might the dreamer be taking a psychological shortcut for the sake of convenience? The dream maker may have used this outer-world experience to depict her fearful attitude toward new psychic potential

that wants to draw close and be integrated. Is she sabotaging a potential connection with a deerlike aspect of herself?

Amplification: The dark street conjures images of Hades, and contrasts with the brightly lit store; dark and light typically represent the unconscious and conscious. In Greek myth, a mortal hunter, Actaeon, spied the goddess Artemis bathing in the woods with her maidens. Artemis, enraged at his intrusion, turned him into a stag—whereupon his hounds chased him down and killed him. Although not an exact parallel, the dream ego, like Artemis, reacts with annihilating force. The dream says only that someone is following her; she *assumes* she is being stalked and does not turn to look before shooting. The dreamer's deerlike instinctual nature is seeking integration, but the dream ego feels threatened and overreacts.

Let's apply this process to another dream. A man considering retirement was burdened by fears of living on a fixed income while caring for his chronically ill wife. He had the following dream:

The Magic Mansion

I am in a mansion that is like a museum. No one is around and I am enjoying access to this wonderful place. I sit on a bench, resting and looking at art. To my right I can see down a long, wide corridor, and as I look, I see a lion cross the hallway about thirty feet away. I am shocked and scared and sit very still so as not to attract its notice. The lion doesn't see me and continues on its way. Next, I see a gorilla. He turns, looks at me, and shrieks. I am terrified, but he also continues on his way. Then I see an elephant! It turns and lumbers toward me. I freeze. When it reaches me, it stops and waves its trunk slowly over my head several times, then turns and leaves. I can't believe what just happened.

Association & Explanation: Having been an artist in his first career, the dreamer had positive memories of visiting museums. A mansion is a splendid, spacious home with sumptuous furnishings and art. The dreamer had been concerned that giving up work would involve constraints—would richness and vitality be foreclosed?

Amplification: The animals, so out of place in this mansion, represent that which is wild, untamed, and full of sacred energy. Elephants are

associated with wisdom and intelligence, and the elephant-headed Hindu god Ganesh is known as the remover of obstacles. The dream maker is showing the dreamer that even at this time of transition and seeming diminution, life, vitality, and beauty abound—and more may be possible than he originally thought. The experience was numinous; the dream maker had affirmed the merits of his work and his entitlement to the "art" of retirement despite the dreamer's conscious apprehensions.

*

You now have several usable keys on your key ring relating to association, explanation, and amplification. Dreamwork begins with the task of gathering personal associations and exploring their significance. Factual explanation broadens our understanding, and archetypal amplification provides access to the storehouse of universal human experience. We all have a foot in both worlds: individual experience that is wholly and uniquely ours; and the eternal and universal, which connects us to the larger whole. Dreams remind us nightly of our dual nature.

4

The Dubious Dream Ego

Encounters in the Inner World

We have such dreams just in order to meet the thing in ourselves which is strangest to us.

—C. G. Jung

Ask someone to tell you a dream and the response will likely begin with "I": "I was with friends at a hockey game" or "I was driving with my family." We refer to the "I" in dreams as the dream ego, our familiar sense of self, even when engaged in improbable dream situations such as wearing scuba gear to work, driving a car from the back seat, or being hunted by zombies. In the dream drama, the dream ego is usually more or less aligned with our waking, conscious personality, while other dream elements portray our various unconscious aspects. By paying attention to how the dream ego relates to other elements, you can get a picture of where you may be prone to one-sidedness and narrowness, and how you protect yourself from thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that challenge your conscious position.

As the Jungian analyst Michael Vannoy Adams explains, dreamwork provides an opportunity "to explore the prospects for an effective relation between ego-image and the non-ego images."[1] A careful look at how your dream ego appears and how it relates to other dream elements can go a long way to revealing a dream's message. Often our dream ego acts with ineptness and arrogance. Like our waking ego, it likes to believe it is in charge. Jung wrote that the ego "is not sole master in its own house and is surrounded on all sides by the factor we call the unconscious."[2] The dream maker shows us nightly how much more than we knew is going on in our inner house. The process of individuation requires that we develop a robust, responsive relationship between our ego and our unconscious. Dreams help

us do this by pointing out the state of these internal relations and stoking our curiosity about our unknown parts.

Just Looking On

Occasionally we have dreams in which there is no "I." Perhaps the dream offers only sense impressions, like "a flagstone terrace" or "a dog barking." These may be fragments of a larger dream that has receded beyond recall or the psyche's disjointed response to a time of disruption or distress.

At other times, we experience dream narrative and action, but the "I" in the dream is an observer, standing by while others act, watching the dream as if it were a film. We may even appear as a dreamer having a dream. The dream maker may present psychic themes at a safe distance to soften our defensive reactions to a provocative situation. We can tolerate events in a movie that would feel overwhelming in real life, and a third-person mode gives the dream ego objectivity. We may also dream that the "I" in the dream is a different race, sex, or age from our biological self.

Yup, That's Me

Most of the time, however, we appear as the main actor in the dream, and our attitudes, behaviors, and feelings match those of our waking selves reasonably well. A female lawyer in her thirties had the following dream:

My Neighbor, J. K. Rowling

I met J. K. Rowling. She has moved into the house next door with her family. We are becoming friends. I am being careful not to be too fawning, but of course I am a little in awe. Rowling and her husband have come over for dinner and I am talking to her husband. It turns out that Rowling suffers from depression and has battled it her whole life.

The dreamer stated that the dream ego's feelings matched how she would feel if J. K. Rowling actually moved next door. Symbolically, some larger-than-life creative energy is now in the dreamer's psychic neighborhood, but

it is vulnerable and perhaps in need of tenderness and care from the dream ego.

> Dreams are neither deliberate nor arbitrary fabrications; they are natural phenomena which are nothing other than what they pretend to be. They do not deceive, they do not lie, they do not distort or disguise . . . They are invariably seeking to express something that the ego does not know and does not understand.
>
> —C. G. Jung

The Real-Life Test

Sometimes, however, our dream ego behaves very differently from how we customarily comport ourselves. We find ourselves doing silly, awful, or irrational things, and we are incredulous that such bizarre behavior made sense in the dream. A woman who works as an accountant dreamed:

Cornflakes

I'm having a morning meeting with an important client. We are back in my childhood home. I'm hungry, so I'm eating a big bowl of cornflakes while speaking with her.

In the dream, it felt natural to hold the meeting in her childhood home while eating cereal. Notable discrepancies between the dream ego's behavior and waking-life norms are attention-getting and present openings for inquiry. Asking, "What if this happened in real life?" can help us hear the dream maker's message. Highlighting discrepancies between real-life attitudes and behavior versus what our dream ego does often opens access to unconscious emotional dynamics. The real-life test helped this dreamer recognize her ambivalence toward this client: the client's questionable business practices were disturbing, yet she felt nervous about confronting her. The dream shows her tendency to retreat to a childlike attitude in the face of unacknowledged conflict.

Key: Apply the real-life test.

It's helpful to apply the real-life test to dreams. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What if this happened in real life?
- What would I do? How would I feel?
- What would I know that I don't know now?
- How would my life be different if this really happened?

Uncovering Persona

Your dream ego can also reveal problems with persona, a Greek word for the masks worn by actors to represent the characters they played. Jung used this word to describe the roles we play in our lives, such as neighbor, friend, or employee. Our roles are shaped by social and relational context, and we select our masks accordingly. Persona is communicated often by what we manifest through attire, accessories, hairstyles, and more. We immediately note the difference between army boots, running shoes, and sandals—not to mention red stilettos.

Having a persona is healthy and adaptive. It helps us meet outer-world needs and navigate the social world competently. Persona becomes problematic only if it is either inadequate or rigid. For example, we can become overly identified with a role, such as star, mother, or scientist—what you *do* is not who you *are*. An adequate persona facilitates interpersonal interactions, but when we cling to our persona too tightly, individuation is impeded.

Dreams can display difficulties with inadequate or inappropriate persona, as in the following dream of a woman in her thirties:

Wedding Outfit

I am in my parents' house, trying to find an outfit to wear to a friend's wedding who I have recently had a distressing conflict with, and we haven't spoken in several months. In my dream, my mother is berating

me, and I am full of anger—it feels like I am pulling myself through it like molasses. Unable to find an outfit, I tear out of the house. As I'm leaving, my sister, who is also somehow my husband, sits on a couch by the door and says that I'm out of control, I need to stop. I leave anyway. Once outside I shed my anger. On the street there is a man on a huge dark horse. I don't know him. He offers his hand and pulls me easily astride the horse. I am afraid to go to the wedding and see my friend, but I am so happy to be with the man on the horse. I feel safe, and my anger washes away. We ride into town and I get off the horse on the street near a Unitarian church. I go to a store window to check my reflection. I'm wearing a two-piece skirt set; my top is red and white and see-through and bears a large Celtic cross. I turn back to face the man who is now off the horse. As I look at him I feel a powerful sense of resolution, trust, and momentum.

The dreamer had recently entered therapy and was getting in touch with anger that had been disallowed in childhood and adolescence. She didn't know how to be in conflict constructively and had had several recent interactions where her expression of anger felt destructive, including with the friend in the dream. She needed a new outfit—a new persona—that would allow her to be in relationship with others even when there was anger and conflict. And she finds one, though she must leave her parents' house to do so. The outfit she eventually puts on is akin to that worn by medieval crusaders—an image of holy war, or conflict for a higher purpose—with a sexy undertone.

An insufficient persona can also be portrayed in dreams. We all have times when, for whatever reason, our personas are not up to the task and we may become unfiltered, inept, or withdrawn. We feel awkward and out of place. Almost everyone has had dreams of being naked or half-dressed in public. These literally revealing dreams often depict a persona inadequate to meet a particular situation.

A recently married female medical student had the following dream:

Naked at My In-Laws

I'm at my in-laws' house. I'm in the bathroom but I'm naked and have left all my clothes in the bedroom. I can't cover up with a towel—it isn't big enough. There are some socks on the floor. I put those on. I will have to walk back to the bedroom like this and hope no one sees me. I go out into the hallway, aware that those downstairs can probably see me up on the landing. I have trouble getting to the bedroom even though it's right across the hall. It seems there are a number of obstacles.

Confident in her chosen career path and comfortable with friends, the dreamer felt awkward and out of place when visiting her in-laws, who came from a different cultural background. They were critical, and she often didn't know the right thing to say or do. The dream depicts her scant persona by showing her naked and exposed. In the real-life test, the dreamer stated that if she were caught in the bathroom with no clothes, "I'd call my husband and ask him to bring me something to wear. I wouldn't walk around naked!" This discrepancy reveals that in addition to her in-laws' rejection, the dreamer did not feel she could count on her husband to protect her.

Disrobed Dreams: Persona Problems

Almost everyone has dreamed of being naked in public, wearing underwear to a meeting, or dining at a fine restaurant in panda-print pajamas—how mortifying. Why do we dream about embarrassing situations so far removed from anything we would do in waking life? It's hardly a coincidence that such dreams take place in public spaces where it's important to put on a social mask and meet outer-world expectations. Work, school, and community are where adaptive demands are strongest. Persona helps us go along to get along and protects us from shame. It provides ease in social situations and allows us to be seen favorably.

We meet persona in dreams through images of clothes, uniforms, hairstyles, housefronts, and other representations of status and identity. When persona in a dream is at odds with waking-world norms, ask yourself what outer-world effort at adaptation may be exacting a heavy psychic price—and be curious about the dream's setting. Is that an area of your life where you feel inadequately "clothed" by a suitable persona? Is that situation one in which your persona is at odds with your real feelings?

A married woman with children dreamed she wore a sheer top to work. Her braless breasts were prominent and visible, and she had no way to cover up. It was literally apparent that she had been stifling vital aspects of her womanhood and mothering for career. She had overidentified with her professional persona as a substitute for longed-for personal validation.

An adequate persona helps us move through social and work situations with less friction, but if we are defined by our role, authenticity is compromised and psychospiritual damage can ensue. In 1934, a German doctor had an upsetting dream the night after one of his assistants showed up at work in a Nazi storm-trooper's uniform. The doctor was angry and troubled but chose not to confront his colleague. He dreamed:

> I was in a concentration camp, but the prisoners were being very well treated—there were dinner parties and theatrical performances. I was

> thinking how exaggerated the reports about life in concentration camps really were, until I happened to look at myself in a mirror and saw I was wearing the uniform of a camp doctor and had on special high boots that sparkled like diamonds. I leaned up against the barbed wire and began . . . to cry.[3]

In the politically and psychologically stifling atmosphere of Nazification, the doctor clung to his compliant persona rather than give voice to his fear, sadness, and indignation. In acting according to political expectations and remaining silent, the dreamer contributed to the emerging horrors—his dream showed him dressed as a camp doctor. Maintaining this rigid persona required him to split off his awareness of the great injustices and suffering and replace it with a manic, glittering fantasy. Prisoners are treated to dinners and entertainment, and the dream boots shine like diamonds, mocking his hypocritical stance. The cost of this highly inauthentic persona is evident—the dream ego is in tears, constrained by barbed wire.

Key: Note whether issues of persona are present.

Dreams may reveal issues with persona—the masks that we wear in the world.

- Does the dream portray any problems with the persona? Might your persona be too rigid? Or inadequate for a social task?
- Are you unprepared or out of place in a dream situation? Does the dream refer to a situation in waking life?
- If your dream ego is wearing an item of clothing in the dream, how might it relate to your social roles?
- In dreams where you appear naked or inadequately clothed, does the dream seem to point to an outer situation in which you don't know how to be or are exposing too much of yourself because you do not have a sufficient, socially appropriate "mask"?
- Does the dream show a persona that is highly inauthentic or inflexible?

Complexes

Dreams often show the dream ego interacting with our "complexes," a term that Jung coined to refer to nodes of patterned energy. Complexes are feeling-toned webs of association, memory, and feeling. They form around an archetypal core but are shaped significantly by personal experience. Imagine that we are born with internal magnets for attachment, language, sexuality, and other central features of being human. These magnets attract the iron filings of personal experience, giving our innate human potentials individual shape and tone.

We can develop a complex about nearly anything. We often speak of an inferiority complex, a guilt complex, an authority complex, or a persecution complex. You might think of a complex as an area of your life in which you typically struggle emotionally—you overreact or otherwise have a disproportionate response in a way that is predictable. Becoming conscious of our complexes and working to integrate what has been split off are key tasks of individuation.

One woman had a significant school complex. When she was a child in China, her domineering mother had demanded that she do well in math and science and beat and shamed her if she didn't bring home top marks. School scenes and classrooms featured in her dreams frequently, underscoring themes of failure and inadequacy, as in the following:

Classroom Humiliation

I'm in a classroom. Carl Jung is at the front of the room on the left side with his glasses on. Peter is on the right side. Peter holds a printed email that I sent to Carl Jung. He and Jung are discussing this email. I am standing in the middle of the classroom on the right side. I feel annoyed about their discussion and think they are finding mistakes in my email. Peter corrects a small error in the email title. I look at Jung and begin to tear up. I put on a fake smile but it's obvious I'm crying. Jung looks at me kindly. Ashamed, I tell him, "Don't ever talk about this email again!" Then I also see a mistake in it. I wake up crying.

When she had this dream, the dreamer was exploring going back to school to study psychology, having discovered Jung. However, her school complex became activated as she contemplated this move, giving rise to familiar feelings of shame, inadequacy, and humiliation. Luckily, an inner Jung offers a gentle antidote. More healing would come later.

Dreams portray the relationship between the ego and our complexes. In the dream above, the presence of the school complex as revealed in the setting of a classroom immediately activates shame and defensiveness that is out of proportion to the action—Peter merely corrects a small error. This illustrates the striking impact that complexes can have on our ego, altering perceptions and narrowing our behavioral repertoire. Sometimes dreams reveal that a complex has a stranglehold on the ego, constricting its functioning and often creating considerable distress, as in the following dream of a twenty-six-year-old man:

Locked Away

My brother Tom has locked me in the closet. I can hear him talking and laughing with friends in the next room. I am banging on the door and asking to be let out, but this only makes them laugh.

The dreamer had had a difficult relationship with his older brother, to whom sports, social life, and academics had come easily. The dreamer struggled in these areas and felt deficient when compared with his brother. He was working to finish his college degree and was full of self-doubt, which held him back. His inferiority complex was imaged by his relationship with his brother, and the dream provides a compelling image of how this complex is restraining the ego.

In the complex territory of complexes, *mother* and *father* are particularly powerful. Parental complexes are supercharged with archetypal force and they mold our relational attitudes to others and the world. The shape parental complexes take is largely determined by childhood experiences with primary caregivers. If your mother was generally loving and warm, your mother complex is likely to be positive, creating a stable internal world that allows you to meet the external world with basic trust and optimism. The masculine principal tends to coalesce around an inner

magnet oriented to the outer world, so our father complex will affect our stance toward achievement, assertiveness, and ambition. Parental complexes function like software that operates in the background. Each of us has an inner mother and father, the templates for interactive patterns that undergird and flavor subsequent perceptions, attitudes, and expectations. Parental archetypes infuse many structural elements of life: universities are our "alma mater," or nourishing mother; governments—as ordering, law-giving entities—relate to the father principle.

The inner mother and father—or mother and father complexes—show up in everyone's dreams. Sometimes they appear in the guise of our actual parents. When your mother or father shows up in a dream, consider first whether the dream is commenting on the inner or outer parent. Does the dream image resemble your actual parent, and is that parent someone who is a significant figure in your daily life? If so, the dream could be commenting on an aspect of your outer-life relationship. Most of the time, however, dream parents will show us how the inner mother or father who has become part of our "operating system" is influencing our lives. We can see how this works in the following young woman's dream:

Dead Cockroaches

I had just come home after a long night of partying and did not have a good time. I am staying with my mother after a long time away. She hasn't woken up yet, so I let myself into her bathroom to have a bath, a large white room. While I bathe, a tall and beautiful woman with a brown bob comes in and introduces herself as my mom's assistant. She tells me I shouldn't rush but that she and my mom will need to use this space soon. I find her very kind but feel angry and jealous that she gets to spend so much time with my mother. I'm also a little embarrassed that I'm naked and have smeared makeup. As I finish my bath, she and my mom come in and begin practicing folk duets, my mom on guitar and her assistant on fiddle. I feel surprised because my mother is not a musical person. When I'm leaving the tub, I notice that there are small piles of dead cockroaches surrounding the bathtub. I say to my mother and her assistant, "Do you guys think we should clean up these cockroaches?" The assistant replies kindly that it might be a good idea and not too difficult. My mother finally speaks like she is annoyed with me and says,

"I don't think we should clean those up at all. This needs to be a lesson to you that sometimes there have to be piles of dead cockroaches."

The dream ego is in her mother's house, deprived of personal space by her mother and the assistant. The real-life test highlights the outrageousness of music practice in the bathroom. Paying attention to persona, we note that the dream ego is embarrassingly naked with smeared makeup. She has not enjoyed her night of partying—it seems that no matter where she goes, she fails to experience pleasure. The dreamer's mother complex appears to have two aspects: a domineering mother and an unmindfully compliant assistant who gives mixed messages. The mysterious assistant is perhaps an image of the price of a relationship with the mother. Though she is attractive and seemingly kind, there is something false and hollow about her. The mother figure tells her daughter to face the dead cockroaches of emotional truth.

Negative parental complexes can transform even if a relationship with a parent remains difficult or the parent is deceased—heartening evidence of the transformative work of individuation. Consider the following man's dream:

The Hug

I am with my mother in her house. We are waiting for my father to return from a holiday. He is ill, and this holiday was a chance to take his mind off his illness and relax. I have an image of him in nature, maybe the Scottish Highlands. My mother tells me that he is late, as he should have been home this morning. She thinks he may be staying away for good. She tells me there is another woman he is very good friends with, and that he might have decided to stay with her forever. I picture this woman and my father together having a wonderful time, laughing and being very connected, and it makes me glad, especially as he doesn't have long to live. My mother is a little disheartened at the idea that he has left her for someone else, but also accepting. Then my father has returned. He has had a good holiday, is still unwell, and needs more medical care. I walk up to him and hug him. This feels like a brave move, and I feel plucky for having the nerve to do it. I hug him for a very long time and it feels very real. I feel his arms around me and my body feels relaxed. I release the

hug and ask if he is okay. He says yes. I wake up with tears in my eyes but feel good.

The dreamer's father died six years before this dream, but parents continue to live in our psyches. The dreamer's inner father—his father complex—is now unlike the dreamer's actual father: "I did not have a close bond with my father and would never have hugged him like that in real life," said the dreamer. "The relationship between him and the woman also felt very unlike him. There was an element of casualness and playfulness that felt more like the way I would behave." The dreamer's integration of his father complex now allows his connection with the "father" part of himself to feel warm and intimate.

Here is a dream of a troubled, unmarried man in his fifties:

Mother on a Trolley

I saw a trolley car and the driver said, "It only goes from here to the border of the tundra and back." I saw my mother on the trolley in her pajamas, but she didn't recognize anyone. We got to the end of the line and my mother began to run toward the ice. It was blocked by electrified razor wire, but she leaped over it like a deer. I went after her but couldn't jump over. I tried to go underneath but got stuck and couldn't move due to the electricity. I became very panicky and distraught that I couldn't save my mother.

This man's mother complex is imaged by maternal absence, in accord with his childhood experience. In sleepwear and dissociated, the mother figure nevertheless possesses a primitive power to bolt—into the unconscious. Everything is freezing, devoid of feeling or human connection. No wonder the dream ego, like the man, suffered from immobilizing anxiety.

The same man had the following dream several years later:

White Candle

I was following people into a cavernous cathedral that turned out to have incredible depth. They disappeared into the darkness of the interior. I was going to light a white candle that would have shed light on a lot of it. I wasn't sure if it was the church of God or Satan.

The mother complex, now imaged as the "mother church," is no longer one of utter abandonment and helplessness but one of archetypal bivalence: Is this a church of God or Satan? While it's not clear whether the people who preceded him will be consumed or consecrated, the dream ego can now shed light on it. The white light of the candle symbolizes consciousness, and the dream ego now has agency, showing change in this dreamer's mother complex.

Key: Look for images of complexes.

- Does your dream feature an image that could relate to a challenging area of your life? The dream might be tracking a familiar complex.
- How does your dream ego behave? How does it relate to the familiar challenge?
- What does the dream show about the relationship between your dream ego and the complex?
- When parents appear in your dream, consider that they may be images of a parental complex—part of your psychological "operating system."
- What is the relationship between your dream ego and the dream parent?
- How is this similar to or different from your relationship with your actual parent?
- Does the dream illustrate how your operating system may be influencing your waking life?
- Does the image show an evolution of the complex? How has it changed since previous dreams?

Between Me and Me—Our Relationship with Ourselves

One of Jung's key insights was that we are more than mere consciousness. The inner world is alive with myriad perspectives and feelings, many of which may be at odds with our conscious position. Some part of ourselves in the deep interior may have a pressing agenda that needs to be pursued, but our conscious self resists it. Feelings deemed too painful or dangerous to experience wander exiled and homeless through our inner landscape. Or some part of us that we have devalued and repressed demands to be known and integrated. While your dream ego stands in for waking consciousness, other dream elements picture unconscious aspects of yourself. Those that are closer to ego consciousness may show up as familiar people. More alien energies may be imaged as mammals, reptiles, insects, monsters, or forces of nature, each revealing progressively more distance from consciousness.

Normal psychological life is full of conflict. We struggle with forbidden urges, guard against uncomfortable realities, and resist demands for growth that challenge the comfortable status quo. The dream maker gives us a nightly report on the state of relationships in the inner world. It reveals how our conscious personality relates to deeper structures by presenting images of the way our dream ego relates to other dream elements. We can see where we are at odds with ourselves, how we avoid growth and change, and where we are deceiving ourselves.

> Nothing is more honest than a dream.
>
> —Federico Fellini

The Dream Ego in Relationship

We can learn much by paying attention to how our dream ego relates to other dream elements. Begin by noting your dream ego's attitude. Is it angry? Fearful? Dismissive? What does your dream ego know or assume? Then ask yourself whether your dream ego's assumption is correct. As you know by now, your dream ego's attitude is often untrustworthy. Evaluate whether there is any evidence in the dream that supports your dream ego's belief. For example, if your dream ego is frightened of someone, note

whether that person manifests threatening behavior. Just as in waking life, your dream ego often assumes things without adequate verification.

Once you've evaluated your dream ego's position, note which elements oppose or cross your dream ego's perspective. Who or what challenges your dream ego or is standing in its way? This will help identify the other side of a conflict or dilemma. It will show us what is missing from consciousness and provide a picture of how we are relating to it. Attending to this will further our individuation quest.

The dream ego's behavior illustrates management of a conflict between consciousness and the unconscious that has generated enough psychic heat to ignite and show up in a dream. The unconscious requires us to confront, engage, and integrate. Consciousness, meanwhile, often seeks to avoid, retreat, and dissociate. Dreams often show our dream ego's attempts to duck, deny, and disconnect. As a rule, the dream ego tends to move in three directions: *turning toward* to inquire and befriend; *turning against* to counteract or fight; and *turning away* to flee or hide. Any of these behaviors may be in service to resolution—or as a means of avoiding and defending ourselves against the psychological issue represented in the dream.

In the following examples, note what the dream ego does and whether the action taken leads to proactive engagement or reactive avoidance.

Turning Toward

Turning toward a dream element can show an openness to engagement and integration—or an attempt to whitewash an uncomfortable truth in favor of a false harmony. A mother of teens had the following dream:

The Bloody Knife

I am chaperoning a group of young adults on a bus tour. A troubled young man with a criminal history has a bloody paring knife. It would be useful for our group in preparing food, but I feel I should tell someone about this. Then we are in a restaurant. I am trying to text my father, but it is taking too long. I am trying to present information about the young man with compassion because I know his difficult history and have reported on him and his crimes before. Then he is reading over my shoulder and wraps his arms around me. At first, I feel this is friendly but

quickly realize he is dragging me away. He says he will kill me. I realize I was naïve. If I had faced outward while writing the text, I would have seen him coming.

The dream ego's movement toward the young man served to avoid conflict. The dream ego glossed over the bloody knife and criminal history, representative of the dreamer's tendency to deny conflict by papering over differences and adopting an inappropriate stance of tolerance and congeniality.

A woman in midlife had the following dream:

Barracuda

I'm on a bus, seated on the aisle. Two men come up the aisle carrying a large barracuda. It is alive and doesn't appear to be in any distress. I'm startled and frightened. I try to lean away but realize that I must look at it. When I do, it turns into a moray eel. I feel disgust and want to avoid it, but realize that I must touch it. I close my eyes and let it touch my face. When I open my eyes, it has become a llama. I'm so happy, and now I affectionately rub its furry face. When I do, it becomes a beautiful, sturdy Icelandic pony. I am in bliss.

As we will explore more fully in the next chapter, psychic contents often assume fearsome forms because we have shunned and rejected them. The face we turn toward the unconscious is usually the face it turns toward us. Because the dreamer initially perceived a psychic content as forbidden, it appears as a predatory barracuda, but when she is able to look at it, it morphs into an eel that inspires disgust. Still, the dream ego does not flinch from the need to confront this inner content and her willingness to engage is rewarded. The eel transforms into a llama; now it's a mammal and therefore closer to consciousness. Her appreciation for the llama engenders another transformation. The creature becomes a horse, a consummate symbol of powerful instincts harnessed to conscious purpose. Icelandic ponies are unique—they have a fifth gait, known as the flying pace, that allows them to run at great speed and gives the rider an airborne sensation. It's often the case that denied qualities turn out to be enlivening when put to conscious

purpose. As this dreamer turned toward psychic contents that had formerly felt off-limits, her creative aspirations were able to take flight.

Turning Against

We often turn against aspects of ourselves that we find objectionable or alien. Dreams depict this tendency through images of attacking or fighting. A man finishing a law degree dreamed:

Homeless Man

I am going downtown and am being followed by a homeless guy with no arms and no legs. I go into a restaurant, and he attacks me before I can shut the door on him. He is biting at my pants leg. I wake up terrified.

The dreamer had intended to become engaged in a service-oriented profession, consistent with his religious convictions and personal ethics, but he was finding himself intrigued by more worldly career aspirations. Because ambition felt incompatible with the dreamer's values, he "amputated" it, and it took on the form of a repugnant, aggressive homeless man. The dream ego turned against an encounter with his vilified aspiration, trying to shut it out even when it desperately sought contact with him.

A woman in her forties with two children had the following dream:

Zombies

I'm with my daughter. We are in a house somewhere and there are zombies. We go into the bathroom to get away from them. I have closed the door, but not all the way. It is open an inch or two. I turn and see that a zombie is peering in through the crack. I am scared but not terrified. I close the door. The zombie manages to reach his hand under the door. I have an axe, and I chop off his hand. Then he sticks his head under the door, and I chop off his head. I feel relief that I have taken care of that zombie. Now I notice that the window is open, and I decide to board it up.

Despite zombies in the house, the dream ego doesn't close the door all the way, indicating that she is not entirely closed off to the unconscious "zombie" part of her. The dreamer noted that when the zombie peered through the crack in the door, it appeared curious—not usually a characteristic of zombies! The zombie's curiosity humanizes it and presents potential for relationship and connection. Perhaps the dream ego could talk to it or even let it in. It briefly seems as if integration of this content might be possible. For now, however, she closes the door and turns against the zombie more strongly: she chops off his hand and then his head and intends to board up the window.

Turning Away

The dream maker asks, above all, for engagement. Turning away from inner conflict can lead to psychic sterility and death. Dreams can reveal a tendency to engage in avoidance and withdrawal—strategies that bring temporary relief but in the long run can result in stasis. An older man dreamed:

Buried Alive

I am alone on a dirt road in the country. I willingly step into a kind of small chamber or cave on the side of the road. The inside of it is dark, soft, and warm. I make myself comfortable. Then the chamber is covered somehow. Now it is like a coffin. I realize I'm being buried alive. I'm trying to shout so that someone will hear me, but I'm terrified.

This dream provides multiple images of deathlike withdrawal and encapsulation. The dream ego's willing withdrawal into a coffin-like enclosure may be an image of helplessness and depression. The ensuing panic is a form of needed activation. The psyche's natural movement toward wholeness entails engagement and integration of psychic contents; avoidance is not in alignment with the life force.

Key: Take note of what the dream says about relationships in the inner world.

- What is your dream ego's initial attitude? What does it know or assume? Is there evidence in the dream that this assumption is correct?
- Who or what opposes your dream ego's position? What values or attitudes might the opposing part represent?
- How does your dream ego relate to other dream elements? Does it move toward, turn away, or turn against?
- What does the action of your dream ego say about how you are treating inner conflicts?
- Is your dream maker exposing a tendency to avoid conflict?

Journaling Prompt

What is the dream element that opposes, challenges, or frightens your dream ego? What do you imagine it wants? What assumptions does your dream ego make about this element?

Defenses

The relationship we have with ourselves inevitably includes ambivalence and denial—we all have ways that we hold parts of ourselves at bay because they threaten to capsize ego's little boat. Sigmund Freud called these psychological mechanisms defenses, and we need them to maintain our psychic composure. Though defenses are necessary, when they are too rigid, they can constrain growth and impede individuation. Dreams provide images of our defenses and let us know if they are deadening or have outlived their usefulness.

A man approaching retirement who was in a process of psychological exploration had the following dream:

Moving Out

I've been living in an apartment but it's time to move out. The man on the top floor has removed everything and swept the rooms clean. He has painted the walls in a dull off-white color, but he has painted over children's pictures that were taped to the wall. I am irritated because the

paint on the railings is wet and I have gotten some on my hands. The man who lived on the floor below me, however, has left a mess. The room is filled with trash. The cab is coming in a little while and I must get the apartment cleaned out. I am taking all of the garbage out to the curb when I find a cast-iron pot shaped like a witch's cauldron and some lamps that are shaped like torches. I feel that these will be useful, and I keep them.

The dream depicts the dreamer's customary defense of rigid scrupulousness that he was beginning to leave behind as he approached the next stage of life. He had always liked to keep his outer and inner life orderly, and he tended to "paint over" conflicts that challenged his ego stance. However, this meant that childlike playfulness and creativity were often covered up with dullness. It is in the messy parts of his psyche that he finds what is valuable—the cauldron with its associations to the sacred but disowned feminine, and the lights of consciousness. The alchemists noted that the philosopher's stone was to be found in the dung heap. The antidote to the sterile, deadening defense is found in what the dream ego had labeled as trash.

Key: Look for images of psychological defenses—the customary ways you manage the anxiety of inner conflict.

- Does the dream provide an image of a defense? What is the dream maker's assessment of it?
- Does the dream indicate that your defense may be creating a problem? Is it too rigid or does it keep you from accessing creativity, aliveness, or intimacy?

Most nights, our dream ego is engaged in strange adventures in the inner world. We interact with people, animals, and fantastical creatures. The dream maker uses these images to illustrate the relationship we have with ourselves—our complicated complexes and denied desires. Although usually the star of the inner play, your dream ego often avoids key conflicts,

works against inclusion of rejected psychic contents, or opposes other dream elements. Dreams issue a nightly invitation to develop relationships with unknown parts of ourselves that are asking for acknowledgment and integration as a necessary step toward individuation.

5

Emotions

The Dream Maker's Palette

On the one hand, emotion is the alchemical fire whose warmth brings everything into existence and whose heat burns all superfluities to ashes. . . . But on the other hand, emotion is the moment when steel meets flint and a spark is struck forth, for emotion is the chief source of consciousness. There is no change from darkness to light or from inertia to movement without emotion.

—C. G. Jung

Often when we wake from a dream, we are aware of the emotions it stirs. Whether the dream wraps us in a subtle, ineffable mood, or engulfs us in a torrent of feeling, dreams capture our interest and attention in part because they provoke emotional reactions. And often, feeling is an important key to unlocking meaning.

Emotions in dreams are one of the main tools the dream maker uses to uncover hidden conflicts, bring to light repressed or unacknowledged contents, and highlight self-deceptions. Feeling in dreams gives us a clue as to the state of relationship between consciousness and the unconscious. For example, a dream in which you are full of righteous anger at a store clerk who is charging too much for something may show that you are devaluing an aspect of your unconscious life. Dreams put us in touch with feelings we've split off, such as sadness. We may be able to feel sorrow for the wounded animal in our dreams that we couldn't experience before, and allowing it into consciousness helps us stay balanced and avoid one-sidedness. The dream maker uses emotion to call the dreamer's attention to what is not known, or has been forgotten or exiled, and helps the dreamer recognize it consciously. If the sentiment in the dream is mild, it's a clue that something is a bit out of sync; intense, disturbing dreams jolt consciousness into paying attention—something is seriously misaligned.

Feelings are a primary aspect of dreams, and greater awareness of them can help generate consciousness that serves individuation.

Emotions can exist throughout the dream and arise from many quarters. Your dream ego may have a big, emotional outburst. Or your dream ego might have a neutral reaction to something that arouses a rush of emotion when you awake. Alternatively, the dream ego may be detached or nonplussed, but some non-ego element may be full of passion. The emotional payload of a dream can be stored in different places, depending on the ego's relationship with it, and part of the healing function of dreams is to move emotions toward consciousness.

Dreams Transfer Feelings to Consciousness

When a non-ego figure expresses big emotions, it can be as if these feelings are transferred to consciousness where the energy they carry can be put to use by the waking personality. Emotions have an independent existence within us. How many times have you felt uneasy during the day, as if something were trying to talk to you, and after a while, you discovered you were still upset about an old argument with a friend? It's common to have strong emotions we aren't aware of consciously. Sometimes an emotion just hasn't become conscious yet. At other times, we repress awareness of troubling feelings because they have the potential to disturb consciousness. Repressed emotions rattle around in our bodies causing the havoc known as symptoms because we don't have a way to relate to them consciously. When unconscious feelings cause problems, the dream maker gives them form, creating an opportunity for conscious interaction. Making your feelings more available is a primary function of dreams and one of the chief ways dreams help your psyche self-regulate.

In the waking world, we experience emotions as coming from within. But in dreams, emotions can live *outside* us. They act like a vital fluid that flows into us through dream characters, settings, and objects. Think of every dream image as a kind of battery carrying a specific emotional charge whose energy can be transferred to consciousness.

Here's a dream about an emotion that had been banished for many years and was brought to awareness with the dream maker's help. A middle-aged

woman was just beginning to acknowledge a deep dissatisfaction with her marriage that she had been pushing away for decades.

Fury

I'm in the car with my husband. He is driving. We are going to a restaurant out in the suburbs. He is driving fast, the way he usually does. At first I feel nervous, but then I remind myself that he is a good driver and I can relax. We arrive at the restaurant and eat. It is a large, open space. There are not many other couples there. We are talking about a band of marauders that has been terrorizing the community, breaking into people's houses and killing them. In the dream I understand this band of marauders to be like John Brown's army in Bleeding Kansas. They are filled with righteous fury but are indiscriminate in their use of violence. As we are discussing this, we hear gunfire in the distance. I look at my husband and tell him I think we should leave right away. I feel bad for leaving the bill unpaid, but I tell myself that I will call the restaurant the next day and give them my credit card number. We go outside into the parking lot, and for a moment I feel relieved that we are getting away. Then I look up the hill and see the band of marauders emerging from the tree line, streaming toward us. They are close now. I know we won't make it to the car. I briefly wonder if we should go back inside, but it is too late. The conflict is unavoidable. The leader of the band is a woman, full of fury.

The woman leader is full of fury, but the dream ego felt only fear. The dreamer had long found her capacity for anger frightening and had kept it largely buried for many years. The woman leader of the band of marauders is an image of the dreamer's disowned and split-off anger. This dream functioned as an invitation to become aware of and integrate some of her rage. In subsequent weeks, the dreamer found she had more access to her previously suppressed anger and its dynamic possibilities. She could resist the urge to please others and was able to fight for her marriage by championing her valid needs. The dream effected a transfer of energy, life force, and emotion from an inner figure to the dreamer's consciousness.

> When we sleep, the soul is lit up completely by many eyes; with them we can see everything that we could not see in the daytime.
>
> —Aeschylus

Dreams can present us with images that carry emotions we once felt but pushed away. But they can also reveal emotions we don't yet know. Here's an example of discovering a new feeling. A medical professional nearing retirement had this dream:

Spiritual Awakening

My girlfriend took me to a spiritual retreat in the mountains. I only went to please her; I'm an atheist. We're part of a group of about forty people. The teacher leads everyone in long meditations that leave me annoyed and tired. Then we start chanting. I hear a booming sound and feel terrified. I shout, "It's real! It's real!"

The dreamer had enjoyed a successful career built on his natural interest in science. When he talked about his dream, he was visibly shaken and tearful. The dream introduced him to awe, transferring a new feeling he was only now ready to experience.

Key: Notice any transfer of emotion.

- Is there a sudden shift in emotions during the dream? If so, ask yourself where it came from. Did it come from another dream element?
- Is there a non-ego element that expresses a strong emotion in the dream? Consider that it may be transferring these feelings, deepening your range of conscious emotions.
- Does the strong feeling present in the dream correspond to feelings you may have been unaware of or have been repressing? Does the dream make these feelings more available to consciousness?

- Where are these feelings in your life currently? Where have they been before now?

Positive Emotions in Dreams

Generally, we can trust positive emotions in dreams and take them at face value. These can include joy, well-being, contentment, and awe. Dreams featuring positive emotions may echo our waking feelings. Then it is as if the dream maker is celebrating with us. Such dreams can be taken as confirmation that we're on the right track, and the dream maker approves of and supports our conscious attitude. Strongly positive dreams can also arrive at times when we face great adversity or hardship in outer life. Such dreams bolster and comfort us in dark times. They give us hope and remind us of a wider perspective beyond the narrow vale of current suffering. Sometimes such dreams have profound spiritual significance, and we may remember them all our life. These dreams ought to be received as gifts.

If the dream ego feels attracted to or comforted by a person, place, or thing in a dream, it is likely that this element represents something positive in the dreamer's psyche even if our conscious attitude does not correspond to the dream ego's. For example, during our nighttime adventures, we may find ourselves feeling attracted to or having a sexual encounter with our real-life partner, a movie star—or someone quite surprising and unlikely. It isn't uncommon for people to have pleasant sexual encounters and even orgasms while dreaming. Most of the time, dream feelings of sexual attraction and pleasure are experienced as positive. They often signify our joy in communing with an aspect of ourselves symbolized by the dream lover. This may be harder to accept when the dream lover is someone who would be highly inappropriate or unlikely were we to pursue such a liaison in waking life. Nevertheless, it is usually safe to assume that such encounters represent positive developments in the inner world. Consider the following young woman's dream:

Sex with My Father

My father and I are having sex, and I am enjoying it.

In her waking life, the dreamer didn't feel close to her father and had a relationship with him that was sometimes wounding and disappointing. The dream struck her as strange and upsetting. When she allowed herself to sit with the dream image, she could acknowledge a desire to be closer to her father. She also noted that he possessed many positive qualities that she needed to develop, including healthy self-assertion.

Positive emotions can clarify the meaning of an otherwise ambivalent dream image. You might encounter an image in a dream whose meaning could go one of several ways. Positive feelings about this image can help you know how to understand it. For example, a woman in her forties had the following dream:

Family Heirloom

My dining room table has been left in a damp, dusty basement. It is covered with mold and I am cleaning it off. I am so happy to have the table back and can't wait to put it in the dining room again.

The dining room table in the dream had belonged to her grandmother. It was a valuable family heirloom that had emotional significance for the dreamer—her grandmother had been someone who had believed in her and encouraged her to take risks. In addition, the family had celebrated innumerable occasions around this table. The dream suggests that the values connected with her grandmother's table have been neglected by consciousness. Leaving such a piece of furniture in a damp basement would be damaging—perhaps there has been lasting harm to the psychological attributes associated with the table. The image of the rediscovered table is therefore ambivalent. Is it wonderful to have found it? Or tragic that a beloved family heirloom is moldy and ruined? The dream ego's unambivalently happy feelings let us know that the dream depicts a generally positive development. We can surmise that the dreamer will be able to restore to consciousness the boldness, confidence, and family orientation she associates with her grandmother's table. The psyche is offering encouragement and support as formerly abandoned values are reclaimed.

Positive emotions such as happiness or excitement often signal that our ego attitude is aligned with the dream maker, but there are exceptions to this rule. Sometimes positive feelings are inappropriate to the conditions pictured. When your dream ego has a positive or nonplussed reaction to a situation that is clearly dangerous, this ought to give you pause. Jung had an acquaintance who loved mountaineering and related a dream in which he rapturously stepped off a peak. Jung warned the man to approach his hobby with more care, but the man laughed at Jung's warning and later suffered a fatal climbing accident. A thirty-eight-year-old man who was involved in high-stakes business deals had this dream:

Speeding

I am racing a cigarette boat down a narrow canal.

The dream ego was exhilarated and had no feelings of concern or worry about the danger inherent in the situation. A few weeks later, the same dreamer had the following dream:

Steep Hill

I am driving a car up a very steep hill. The hill becomes so steep it is almost vertical, and it seems that the car might tip over backward.

Again, the dream ego reported no fear or alarm, and merely noted that it seemed "cool" to drive up such a steep hill. The discrepancy between the emotion we *should* have in a dream and the emotion we *do* have can be a warning from the dream maker that our attitude is dangerously wrong. The analyst of the young businessman reflected her concern about the dangerous psychic situation that was referenced in these dreams, but his attitude was dismissive. He couldn't connect with the appropriate feeling and appeared to have a self-destructive streak that could not be held in check even though the dream maker attempted to warn him about it. Several years later, he suffered a significant personal tragedy. Our dreams can alert us to profound disconnects between consciousness and the unconscious.

Key: Positive feelings in dreams can usually be trusted.

- Does your dream ego feel good about something? This can usually be taken at face value unless there is evidence to the contrary.
- Does your dream maker appear to be cheering you on? Or offering you encouragement during a difficult time?
- Do pleasant feelings in a dream help to clarify an ambivalent image?
- Is there evidence that positive feelings are wildly inappropriate to the dream situation? This might be a warning that consciousness is perilously out of touch with a potential risk.

Sadness and Grief

Researchers have found that dreams worldwide portray more negative than positive experiences and feelings, and theorized that such dreams provide practice for dealing with challenges in waking life.[1] Lest this seem like a good reason to ignore your dreams, remember that it takes energy to push feelings like sorrow, heartache, and melancholy underground—energy that could be used for aliveness and purpose.

Feeling tells us that something needs attention. When you have a dream in which your dream ego feels sadness or grief, consider what needs to be brought into awareness for a needed "aha" of recognition. A large part of the process of individuation is admitting feelings into consciousness and developing a relationship with them. When we have not allowed our distress, the dream maker may seek to bring it to our attention, as in the following dream of a young woman.

Starving Kitten

I returned to my apartment after some time away. I saw a yellow kitten lying in the hallway. It was emaciated and almost dead. I had forgotten it and felt shattering sorrow and remorse.

The dream kitten is a vivid image of the abandonment of a young, innocent part of the dreamer. She had grown up with a veneer of privilege that obscured a profound lack of emotional connection, and she had had difficulty apprehending the wounds caused by this absence of care. She could feel sorrow for the kitten that she had not been able to feel for her young self. By moving the dreamer into feeling the anguish of abandonment, the dream also moved her into healing.

Sometimes the dream maker's attempt to surface buried feeling is incomplete. We may not be ready to integrate what it has brought forward. In this case, there may be dream images that are full of emotion but do not manage to stir an expected feeling in the dreamer. When we share such a dream with a friend or therapist, the other person may feel deeply moved, while we feel little. If we have dreams that depict objectively poignant or horrifying situations and our dream ego has little emotional reaction, it is likely we are cut off from important feelings. Consider the following dream from a thirty-five-year-old man who had a history of physical and emotional abuse:

Neglected Animal

It is night. I go to take the trash out. Everything is dark in the alley, but then I am startled by a terrible cry. It sounds as if a child is wailing in pain. I look to see where the sound is coming from. There is a tiny animal behind the trash can. It looks like a combination of a puppy and baby bird, and it is crying in a human voice.

Unlike the previous dreamer, this man had no significant reaction to the dream. He had memories of his father beating him that he reported to his therapist without emotion. The dream shows tremendous pain associated with a young, vulnerable part of himself that has been relegated to a dark alley where the dreamer disposes of his trash. The puppy/bird provided a potential avenue to awareness of these exiled feelings. The dreamer could appreciate intellectually that he had cut himself off from the anguish of his childhood but was unable to connect with those feelings at that time.

Sadness in dreams is healing because it activates self-compassion. Unless our dream features mourning for a lost loved one, the injured animal or

neglected child of our night visions is usually a wounded aspect of ourselves. Such dreams can allow us to grieve our denied suffering and forgotten losses. This can move us to be gentler and more loving toward ourselves, as in the following dream of a woman in her twenties:

The Only Heart I'll Ever Have

I woke up from a surgery, immediately seeing the surgeon's blue eyes. "Why am I not dead?" I asked. I had voluntarily decided to have my heart removed. "Sometimes it happens that patients keep living for a few minutes after we remove the heart. Don't worry, it will not last long." So I resumed my waiting, lying on a surgery chair. I waited, and as I kept waiting, my anxiety increased, for I was still alive. I turned around and saw a nondescript shoebox: inside, there was my heart. The hole in my chest ached terribly, and I started holding the shoebox in my arms, increasingly terrified, because after more than an hour, I was still alive without a heart in my chest. I got up and decided to do something about it. I called my sister and asked her to find our family physician. I went looking for my parents and told them what was happening. I needed to reattach my heart, but time was dwindling. My mother did not believe me and dismissed my concerns. I started walking aimlessly through my city, trying to call the physician, who did not answer. Finally, I came across an ambulance and a young female doctor. I told her, "This is my heart and I need you to at least try to put it back where it belongs. It is mine, it is the only heart I will ever have, and I cannot let it go. Please, please, I beg you to at least try!" I was sobbing uncontrollably. She looked at me with pity and said that she could try, but it was already late.

The dreamer noted that she was at first anxious because she wanted to die. "Then I started thinking of my heart, lonely and abandoned in that shoebox, and I felt sorrow," she explained. The sorrow compelled her to do something. No longer passive and suicidal, she is moved to action and tries to find someone to help her reattach her heart. Though she feels desperation at the end, the presence of the young female doctor who is at least willing to try provides a measure of hope. The dream's medicine is in the sorrow for

her lonely, abandoned heart and her fervent wish for psychological aliveness.

Key: Sadness and grief can open the heart.

Dreams that feature sadness and grief are usually an invitation to feel these emotions more deeply and integrate them into consciousness.

- Note whether the dream has given you greater access to your sadness. Perhaps you can shed tears you weren't able to find before.
- If the dream depicts a sad situation but you feel neutral, that's okay. For now, note the feeling pictured in the dream. The dream is inviting you to step closer to this emotion, but it can take time.
- Dreams that surface feelings of sorrow can help you find self-compassion.

Journaling Prompt

What part of the dream calls up sadness? Write about that part in detail, focusing on feelings. If there is an animal, child, or other wounded being in the dream that carries sadness, what would you like to say to that part? If it could speak, what would it say to you?

Aversive Feelings—Anger, Disgust, Fear, and Nightmares

When our dream ego experiences aversive feelings, there are two broad possibilities for understanding, and we need to weigh the evidence to discern the dream maker's intent. The dream maker may feel that such a reaction is necessary and encourage it. More commonly, the dream maker is showing us where we are at odds with ourselves or engaged in self-deception. It does this by holding up a mirror, as if to say, "Here's what you look like from my perspective." When you have dreams that feature anger, disgust, or fear, consider first that your dream ego's attitude is suspect. The dream maker may be pointing out that we are seeking to avoid a truth or

protect ourselves from an uncomfortable encounter with an aspect of ourselves.

Anger

It's common for the dream ego to feel mad in dreams. Let's consider two dreams in which the dream ego felt angry. We'll start with a dream that Lisa had as a graduate student in her twenties. She had just begun reading Jung and attending to her dreams.

Cat Talk

I've been keeping my cat Misty in a basement or garage. Johanna, the old woman from downstairs, had been looking in on her for a weekend while I was away. I didn't take her out of the basement right away once I got back, and Johanna kept looking in on her, even after I told her I was back and didn't need her to do so anymore. Johanna started leaving me notes and nagging me to attend to something in the basement that would make it better for Misty. And then, even though I had already paid her for the weekend, she sent me a letter with an itemized invoice for $8,000! The tone of the letter was a bit angry. She explained that she had spent $12 on cat toys and that she had also taken Misty out for a nice lunch at a restaurant that had cost $80. By far the largest item on the bill was something she called "cat talk"—her efforts to communicate with Misty. For this, she charged me $20,000! I was furious.

Lisa awakened with the same outrage the dream ego experienced. Only after working on the dream did Lisa realize it was depicting an inner situation. She had been shortchanging an important part of herself, leaving her beloved "cat" neglected and uncared for in the basement. Johanna invokes the archetypal wise old woman—an aspect of the divine feminine, often devalued in our culture and in Lisa's life at the time. In the dream, Johanna is closely connected with Lisa's cat. Cats are common symbols of instinctual feminine energy. Lisa's dream maker was confronting her with the reality that she had undervalued these aspects of life.

The dream ego's anger portrayed how Lisa's conscious personality was relating to the unconscious—with defensiveness, disparagement, and

entitlement. Lisa's anger in the dream showed her that, in waking life, she was responding to the call to integrate soulfulness with "rational" irritation and avoidance. The dream provided an attitude correction by pointing out her devaluation of her inner feminine.

Let's turn to a dream in which the dream maker appears to be affirming the need for an angry response:

Crocodile in the Kids' Bedroom

There was a crocodile in our house. He was still and lay in our bedroom while the kids played around him. He made me very anxious. I was aware that we hadn't been feeding him, and I worried that as time went on, he'd eat one of the kids. He had been with us for a few days or a week, the kids jumping around him and playing without a care. One day he is in the room of our youngest girls—ages six and four. Their room is clean and the lighting is dim and pinkish. The crocodile is facing their bed and I see his mouth is open as he lies there, and this is the final straw. The girls are playing in the opposite corner—I get them out. I close the door and angrily and confidently confront my husband, saying this is ridiculous and he needs to call someone to get rid of it. He reacts as though I'm being dramatic, and I say no, what is crazy is having a crocodile around babies. He nonchalantly relents but says we'll have to split the cost to have it removed, about $200 from each of us.

The dreamer is a thirty-four-year-old woman who was homeschooling her four children. She reported unhealed trauma and found herself feeling depressed, overwhelmed, and angry. This dream occurred at a time when she was negotiating with her husband to send the kids to school so that she could study and pursue a career. In the beginning, the dreamer feels anxious and worried but proceeds as if it is normal to have a crocodile hanging out with the children. The dream ego takes note of increasing signs of danger—the crocodile's mouth is open—and finally takes action. Feelings of fear intensify during the dream and turn to anger and protectiveness. The dream maker found a dramatic way to show the dreamer that her passive initial attitude was inappropriate.

The crocodile represents an aspect of the dreamer's psyche that has gone hungry—she hasn't been feeding it. As a result, it poses a threat to her children. The dreamer has ignored the seriousness of the problem. Her anger about the crocodile and at her husband is entirely appropriate and spurs her to action in the dream and her life. Addressing this issue will mean confronting her husband, and she will have to take responsibility for her half of the problem.

> This is the secret of dreams—that we do not dream, but rather we are dreamt.
>
> —C. G. Jung

One way to discern whether the feeling of anger is appropriate and encouraged by the dream maker is to consider the dream's resolution. Lisa's dream ended with outrage and a sense of stalemate. Dream-ego Lisa wasn't about to pay the exorbitant fees demanded, and Johanna is likewise not backing down. There is no good solution in sight. The crocodile dream, on the other hand, ends with a clear resolution. The problem posed by the dream—the hungry crocodile in the children's bedroom—is being decisively addressed, and the dream ego's anger helped to bring about a solution.

Key: Anger can be appropriate and productive or a signal we're working against our growth.

An angry dream ego may reveal what your dream maker thinks of your attitude. If your dream ego is angry, consider the following questions.

- Who is your dream ego angry at?
- What is your dream ego angry about?
- Is it possible that your dream ego's anger represents a defensive attitude toward an unconscious aspect of yourself?
- Does your dream ego's anger help to resolve the crisis depicted in the dream, or does it lead to stalemate?

Disgust

If anger in dreams often signals that we are pushing away some part of ourselves, disgust often points to shame and self-loathing. A young woman had the following dream:

Overflowing Toilet

I was in grade school and had an urgent need to go to the bathroom. I asked the teacher for permission, but she sent me to the principal's office to get permission. I was worried I would have an accident, but the principal said it was okay and I made it to the toilet. So much poop was coming out, and then it was my intestines. I was panic-stricken and slammed the lid down and flushed the toilet. Everything flooded all over the floor.

The dreamer found this dream "sick and disgusting." It portrays the dreamer's rejection of aspects of herself. The dream maker seems to be alerting her to damaging self-abnegation. There is danger in suppressing our emotional life—the dreamer is trying to flush away her intestines, home of "gut" feelings. By calling attention to the cost of denial, the dream maker is inviting self-acceptance.

As with anger, sometimes the dream maker appears to agree that disgust is an appropriate response. A forty-five-year-old physician dreamed:

Hidden Dead Body

I am living in a house. The house served a purpose in the past, but now as I look around, I find it is shabby and dated, and I feel some revulsion. It is not clean. I can't clean it well and the cleaner—who is my yoga teacher—doesn't do a thorough job. Especially she seems to have been skipping the bathroom. The bathroom is especially shabby. Although I want to leave, I cannot. There is a dead body here that would be discovered if I tried to move on. I am wondering how to dispose of it. The dead body doesn't feel like it is dead due to me, but I've been hiding it. Even though I know it's risky, I start to investigate some sort of way to dispose of it—through processing.

The dream ego feels disgust and revulsion at the dirty, dated house with its hidden dead body. She identified her yoga teacher as a woman overly invested in appearing spiritual and enlightened—she wants to skip the shitty parts of life. The dream maker appears to be in accord with the dreamer's disgust at the house that "served a purpose in the past." Now it's out of date and contains a corpse. Something that has been swept under the carpet must be engaged. Just as the dreamer's anger in the crocodile dream comes as a result of increasing consciousness, this dream ego seems to have a growing awareness of the dirty house and the need to process the dead body. The dream maker is documenting and assenting to a dawning awareness.

As with anger, look at the resolution of the dream to help clarify the significance of disgust. The toilet dream ends with an image of being overwhelmed by revulsion. No resolution is implied and things are headed in an alarming direction—her guts are coming out. In the dirty-house dream, though all is not resolved, a positive eventual resolution is implied. The dream ego intends to investigate and process the situation with the aim of disposing of the body. The dream ego's disgust motivated her to clean things up.

Key: Disgust in dreams can point to feelings of shame and self-hatred or express a necessary revulsion.

A disgusted dream ego may be your dream maker's way of showing you your own self-loathing and shame.

- Who or what is your dream ego disgusted by?
- Could that thing be a despised and rejected aspect of yourself that now seeks acceptance and integration?
- Does the dream have a clear resolution?
- If so, did disgust help to motivate your dream ego in a positive direction?

Fear

Fear and anxiety are two of the most common emotions experienced in dreams. Forbidden aspects of self often evoke fear on the part of the dream ego because they challenge our unwritten "rules" about who we are and threaten our sense of self. Jung called these rejected parts of ourselves "the shadow," and we focus on this in chapter 8. For now, it's helpful to know that your dream ego often feels afraid of an element that symbolizes disallowed aspects of yourself. Jung remarked, "The general rule is that the more negative the conscious attitude is, and the more it resists, devalues, and is afraid, the more repulsive, aggressive, and frightening is the face which the dissociated content assumes."[2] Consider the following dream of a sixty-three-year-old woman:

Pursuit

I'm walking through town at night. No one else is there. I realize someone is following me. I start to run, and my pursuer speeds up.

The dreamer reported that she was frightened in the dream. When prompted to imagine the dream from the perspective of the man who was following her, she was genuinely surprised to learn that he was following her because he had something helpful to say. The dream therefore provides a picture of the ego's attitude toward an unconscious element. Some disallowed part of her wanted to get the ego's attention and had useful information to communicate. This potential encounter scares the dream ego because it challenges her narrow but comforting understanding of herself. Fear dreams are often invitations to turn toward a little-known part of ourselves and ask, *What are you here to teach me?*

Chase Dreams

We're running as fast as we can, but our pursuer is on our heels. Heart pounding, lungs burning, the end is imminent—and then we wake up. What a relief! It was just a dream. Many of us have had chase dreams. Some have speculated that being chased is a vestigial memory from our evolutionary past when we were prey to wild animals. Whether or not that's the case, being chased is a universal image of fear.

When we are children, what's chasing us is often fantastical, with archetypal echoes of monstrous proportions. As adults, we may be chased by an armed pursuant. It isn't uncommon for chase dreams to be recurring, as if "it" takes up the hunt night after night. Though chase dreams can be associated with waking-life experiences of trauma and terror, they usually belong mostly to the inner world. We're often pursued by a part of us we have banished that is demanding conscious recognition and integration.

The terrifying tone of chase dreams usually shifts when we can turn and face our pursuer. A graduate student feeling overwhelmed by academic demands dreamed he encountered a bear in the woods. He turned and fled, but realizing this was hopeless, finally turned to face the bear and death. To his surprise, the bear sat on its haunches, waved its forepaws in the air affably, then ambled away. The dream message is unavoidable—you can't solve this problem by running from it. You have to face it—and discover that what has been feared as monstrous is within the ego's capacity to acknowledge.

Occasionally, fear in dreams is an appropriate response. The dream may affirm that something in our attitude is indeed dangerous and encourage a different approach. Consider the following dream of a thirty-seven-year-old woman:

Comedy Performance

I'm at an outdoor comedy performance. It is someone fearless, like Dave Chappelle. The performance is taking place in a not-so-nice neighborhood, and the seating is makeshift bleachers. It is an intimate

space and somehow fitting for the performance. I am there with Kate. A man wanders in. He exudes danger. I'm frightened by his erratic behavior—perhaps he is high. He doesn't have a ticket. There is some kind of commotion in the aisle near us. I am on the end of the row, so very near. Kate instructs me to lean away from the aisle as much as possible to avoid any physical confrontation that might be about to occur. Other people are already leaning away, but it doesn't occur to me until Kate instructs me to do so. The scene is very tense. The man is menacing. I am thinking that the only person who can stop this is Dave Chappelle because he has the authority of celebrity. What is clear is that the dangerous man will take all or most of the money for Dave's performance—that when the hat is passed around at the end, he will take the money. I can't imagine a way out. It feels like checkmate. Dave comes up to the man and stands facing him. Then he collapses on the ground. It is a deliberate response. His body becomes attenuated so that there is space between his limbs at his joints, almost as if he had been dismembered. The dangerous man stands staring down. He steps among Dave's fragments. He seems perplexed. Eventually he leaves. He just wanders off. His menace has been depotentiated. When he leaves, Dave reconstitutes himself and is able to claim the full amount of his earnings.

In waking life, the dreamer was facing intense conflict with a business partner and was angry with him. The dream shows her fear of her own anger and that of her partner, both of which felt dangerous and potentially destructive. Her anger felt out of control and, like the dangerous man, it threatened to rob her of her hard-earned rewards. The medicine in the dream was the comedian, an archetypal trickster, who shows that an indirect approach to conflict can win the day.

Once again, the dream's resolution—or lack thereof—can help us orient to the significance of fear in the dream. The pursuit dream did not have a clear resolution—it left the dream ego in a heightened, frightened state. In the comedy-show dream, the dream ego has been taught—first by her friend Kate, and then by the comedian—how to lean away from direct engagement with a part of the psyche that may be destructive. The confrontation with her business partner in waking life went well because she was able to allow for some cooling-off time during their discussion.

Nightmares

Nightmares are a special category of frightening dreams characterized by extreme fear. A nightmare is any dream we find terrifying. We may wake up with a cry, our heart pumping, relieved to have realized that the nightmare was just a dream. Common in childhood, nightmares can continue to plague us into adulthood and may be especially common during periods of extreme stress or disruption in outer life. Even though nightmares are deeply unpleasant and can even make us afraid to go to sleep, they are sent by the dream maker to move us toward health and wholeness, just like any other dream.

The feelings of terror that typify nightmares are the dream maker's way of making us notice something. Fear acts as an emotional highlighter, ensuring our attention. "The nightmare is really shock therapy," according to Marie-Louise von Franz. "When we have nightmares, it means we are in a psychological danger of some sort and much too sleepy and unaware of it."[3] Such dreams can impact us and move us toward individuation. They serve as reminders that there are forces in the psyche much greater than ego. The following is a recurring nightmare of a woman in her twenties:

A Sea of Sharks

I was floating in the sea looking at the sky at night and suddenly many, many sharks came to the surface, but they didn't seem to be alive. I woke up very agitated.

The dreamer, through psychoanalysis, was beginning to pay attention to her dreams. As she began to delve into her depths, her oldest, deepest anxieties surfaced.

Paradoxically, nightmares may also play a containing function, giving us a visual image of our worst fears and thereby allowing us to relate to them more effectively. Consider the following childhood nightmare recalled by an adult:

Monster Stairs

As a child, I had a recurring nightmare that had me focused on reaching the top of a staircase. I would try over and over (nightly) to step gingerly, quietly upon each stair as I climbed so as not to wake the sleeping monster that was, in actuality, the stair itself.

The dream began around the time that she and her mother left her father and moved out of the house. The dreamer does not remember conflict between her parents. She recalls her father as a kind and gentle man, but he came home from Vietnam with inner monsters. As a child, the dreamer lived in a house where there were unexpressed and unacknowledged tensions. This may have created an atmosphere of dread and foreboding she did not have the language to express. Since an unnamed fear is usually more distressing than one we can identify, the terrifying monster stairs that provided an image of the many invisible emotional trip wires in the home may have been the dream's medicine. The dream maker may have been helping the dreamer face feelings that could not be spoken about.

Key: Fear in dreams often reflects a misplaced ego attitude.

When your dream ego feels fear, your dream maker is likely depicting your relationship with an aspect of yourself that feels off-limits and therefore dangerous.

- What is your dream ego's relationship with the frightening element in the dream?
- If you are afraid of an element in the dream, there is a good chance that you have met an aspect of the unconscious that feels threatening because it challenges the psychic status quo. What might that element be wanting to communicate to you?
- Does the dream have a clear resolution? If so, does it provide guidance on how to relate to the frightening images?
- Your dream maker may use the intensity of nightmares to get your attention. How might your nightmare be helpful?

Dreams offer us emotional experiences of vast breadth and depth. Psychiatrist and author Iain McGilchrist noted that the repertoire of emotions in dreams extends far beyond those available to consciousness. “I’ve experienced emotions in dreams that I’ve not experienced in waking life,” McGilchrist noted in a 2021 podcast with *This Jungian Life*. “In certain dreams, I have actually experienced emotions that simply don’t have words.”[4]

For Jung, feeling is a function of valuation: How important is this to me? What is it worth? In dream life, images are infused with emotions—especially those we prefer to disown: sadness, shame, fear, anger, or disgust. Such feelings range from subtle and ineffable to astonishing and overpowering. Dream feelings may stay with us and color our moods for hours, days, or even longer. If dreams were paintings, image and metaphor would provide the shapes and form of the artist’s composition, and emotions would bring the color—every shade, range, tint, and trace.

What is the feeling?—This is one of the first questions to ask yourself when reaching into a dream. Emotion compels our attention and highlights what is of most significance. Understanding feeling in dreams is crucial for unlocking a dream’s meaning and is one of the primary ways the dream maker tells us what we need to know to serve our individuation.

6

Theater of Dreams

Structure and Dynamics

A dream is a theater in which the dreamer is himself the scene, the player, the prompter, the producer, the author, the public, and the critic.

—C. G. Jung

Sometimes, we wake up with only a scrap of a dream—a single image, a fleeting sense perception. If we're lucky, however, we remember more. There are characters, scenes, and action. There may be a beginning, a middle, and an end, making our dream a story. Stories are the fabric of meaning. Stories link consciousness to the unconscious, connect feeling and image, and make wholes out of parts. Every biographer and memoirist tells the story of a life. Children want to hear favorite stories again and again. Story—whether on stage, in film, or in a book—weaves together threads of memory, experience, feeling, and desire. We are wired for story, for story is how the soul speaks.

The oldest form of story is drama. The dance, song, and ritual that are part of drama are so ancient that no one can trace their origin. Forms of enactment are worldwide, for drama tells universal tales and is inherent to being human. We tell, sing, and dance the important stories about life, ourselves, and the mystery of the infinite. Jung perceived that dreams are the theater of the psyche. The dramatic narratives that occur spontaneously at night illustrate the mythopoetic nature of the soul's natural movement. When we go to sleep and dream, it is not unlike taking our seat in an ancient Greek theater as the dream maker creates an inner play.

Not all dreams arrive as a coherent narrative with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Some string together a confusing concatenation of scenes that appear disjointed. However, sometimes when you look at such dreams the right way, underlying patterns reveal themselves. Rather than being

structured like dramatic narratives, some may be modeled after a two- or three-paneled painting, and still others may be constructed like a popular song, with patterns of chorus and verse. It's as if the dream maker has a number of initial prototypes from which to choose. When we can discern the basic architecture of the dream, the flow of the story is revealed. This gives us a powerful tool for understanding.

Dreams as Drama

When we turn our focus to a dream's dramatic structure, we attend to how the dream story moves. Like the wave-particle duality in quantum physics, which allows discernment of either waves or particles depending on the observer's focus, attending to dramatic structure allows us to see the "waves" of a dream's movement in addition to the "particles" of image and symbol. We notice whether the waves are choppy, churning, or lazily lap the shore. If there is a snake in a dream, for example, we want to understand what it is *doing* in addition to its symbolic significance—is it crawling, biting, or just hanging from a tree? We notice how dream characters interact with one another and react to events, and how their feelings shift.

If you could attend a performance of a classical Greek drama, you would notice four main components: the setting and initial situation, the actions of the characters, the high point of tension—crisis or catastrophe—and the final outcome. Not every dream has all these components, much less in a well-ordered form, but knowing the essential elements of drama can help us identify them in a dream. Let's look at these structural elements in the theater of dreams.

Setting: Where Are We?

Dreams often begin with a setting. The curtain rises and we are somewhere —our familiar kitchen, the office, or a strange locale. The setting of the dream is usually conveyed in the first sentence or image, and it lets us know what psychic neighborhood we're in. Even if the scene is your childhood home or a medieval city, it almost always refers to a current inner dynamic. As the symbolic context within which the action transpires, the setting announces the dream maker's agenda by depicting the psychic situation under discussion. Paying attention to setting can clue us into the subject of

the dream. A dream set at work will likely be about career. A dream set in our childhood home may let us know that an old pattern from our family of origin has shown up. A dream set in the bedroom may be telling us something about an intimate relationship or a sexual issue.

House Dreams

Houses frequently appear in dreams. They are important in our daily lives and provide images of our ego's "built environment." We dream of childhood and existing homes, though they may not look anything like our actual dwellings. We dream of imaginary homes, and we may even have a "dream home" that we visit time and again that feels familiar though it bears no resemblance to any known home.

Notice feelings about the house in your dream. Were you surprised and delighted to open doors and discover rooms you never realized were there? Or was it a "fixer-upper" that needed a lot of work? The condition of a dream house can reveal the state of our current psychic structure. The function of featured rooms also provides clues. We cook and convene in kitchens, are intimate in bedrooms, cleanse and excrete in bathrooms, and store things in attics and basements. Thin walls and missing doors may indicate boundary-related issues.

According to Jung's biographer Deirdre Bair, Jung felt that houses had a particular significance in dreams:

> "A house depicts a life situation. . . . One is in it as one is in a situation."
>
> He noted that when patients brought him dreams of houses, or even when he himself dreamed of them, they were always unfinished, always in need of another room, or there was always a mysterious corridor attached to one's actual residence that led to rooms that were not there in reality. And when the dreamer awakened there was always the conscious feeling that one should "solve the question of this house, to do something with it."[1]

Make use of explanation, association, and amplification to reveal the significance of the dream setting, just as you would for any other dream element. If your dream begins in your kitchen, note your associations. Maybe it's where you are most likely to spend time with your teenage kids. Explanation tells us that a kitchen is where food is prepared, stored, and often where informal meals are eaten. Finally, ponder a possible archetypal underpinning for "kitchen." The ancestor of today's modern kitchen is the hearth, a source of warmth and light, the heart of the house, and the realm of women.

Some dreams are set in unfamiliar places—homes we have never been in, strange cityscapes, or even alien planets. When the setting is unfamiliar, the dream maker may be drawing our attention to new possibilities or unknown parts of our psyches. Some dreams either do not mention a physical setting or allude to it in a minimal way. The psychological situation and ensuing dream drama may not yet be well defined. A new awareness may just be taking shape.

The Initial Situation

When the inner curtain comes up, we are usually introduced to more than setting. Some action may already be taking place and other actors may be present. Consider the following initial situations:

I have a horse in the basement.

I'm at a restaurant and the waiter brings me a bowl of thumbtacks.

I'm in my living room and a baby crawls out from under the couch.

It can be helpful to notice what's happening and who is present as the dream begins. This sets the scene for ensuing developments. Paying attention to how the final situation differs from the opening scene can reveal important insights, as we can contrast the portrayal of the initial psychic situation with its resolution or lack of one. To illustrate the function of setting and initial situation, let's look at the beginning of a dream of a woman in her thirties:

The Old Thread Factory

A young man and I are riding bicycles on the street by my old high school—the feeling is that we are pals.

The dream places the dreamer near her old high school. This immediately signals that the dream will address some issue with roots in this part of her life. We also learn that she is riding bikes with a young man. The dreamer is moving through life under her own steam and is companioned by an inner figure. As the dream begins, the masculine and feminine are balanced.

Key: Pay attention to the setting and initial situation.

Note the setting and initial situation in your dream, usually given in the first sentence or two of a dream text. These will likely provide important clues as to the dream's "agenda." Dream settings provide an immediate sketch of the psychological landscape. You might consider the following questions:

- Does the setting point to a domain that tells you what aspect of your life the dream is speaking to? (For example, if your dream is set at the office, it is likely related to work.)
- Do you have personal associations to the dream setting?
- Can you use explanation or archetypal amplification to further understand the significance of the setting?
- In the initial situation, what other actors are present? Is there a balance between male and female characters? What action is underway?

Action: Twists and Turns

After we take in the initial situation, action ensues. The dream drama will be played out by the actors, usually featuring the dream ego as the lead player. The action unfolds from the psychological situation depicted in the setting, but because the dream maker doesn't always link events in a way consciousness is used to, it can be hard to follow the plot.

Dream events are "stage props" used by the dream maker to represent inner dynamics.[1] Patterns of action in dreams can include almost anything: discovery, conflict, attempts at connection, travel, confrontation, hiding, pursuit, and lovemaking. Just as in a play, there may be several scenes, including sudden shifts of situation or place. The first act may take place in one location, with subsequent acts set somewhere else. If your dream features multiple settings, it can be helpful to compare them and notice how they may reveal a developmental pattern or refer to different parts of the psyche.

Let's look at the action in the dream we started above, "The Old Thread Factory":

> We go past an old factory to the left. It is run-down but beautiful in an odd way. Weeds and bushes have grown up around it. It's brick and has a kind of dignity, even though it has not been in use for a long time. I realize, "Oh, it's the old thread factory!"

As the action develops, the dreamer discovers the old thread factory. The old brick building is intact though neglected and seems to recall another era. In waking life, there was no such building, and the dreamer did not have any immediate associations with thread or factories. The dream says that some capacity for thread making has been in disuse. Threads are connectors —we use thread to stitch things together. We follow the thread of an idea or conversation. Thread also has many mythological references: in Asian lore, people destined to meet are connected by a red thread; Ariadne gave Theseus a ball of thread to guide him out of the minotaur's maze; the Fates spin the thread of our lives.

Let's consider this compelling image in context of the dramatic structure of the dream. How is the discovery of the old thread factory related to what comes before—that is, the dreamer's high school and her pal? Perhaps her connection with the inner masculine companion has led to the rediscovery of an old, abandoned part of herself. With this dream we might wonder about the connection between the dreamer's ability to follow an inner thread and her experience in high school.

The dreamer's early life had been chaotic. Her mother suffered from a mental illness, and her parents had divorced. In high school, the dreamer shuttled between her mother's apartment, where things could be volatile but alive; and her father's home, ruled by a rigid stepmother. The dreamer reflected that high school had provided opportunities for self-discovery and expression. She felt connected to peers and teachers. The old thread factory is a poignant image of a lost sense of connection with self and others—and it is still intact.

Key: Make a note of the main action in the dream.

The action is the main development in the dream drama.

- What gets revealed?
- How might it be related to what has come before and what comes after?
- Is there a new setting? How is it different from the first setting? How is it the same? Is it referring to a different part of the psyche or situation?

Crisis or Catastrophe

The crisis or climax of the dream is the high point of the tension. As Jungian analysts Edward Whitmont and Sylvia Perera explain, it represents "the maximum possibilities, positive or negative or even nightmarish, that are potentially inherent in the development the dream happens to be pointing to."[2] The climax or crisis can range from subtle and plausible to enigmatic and unexpected—or shocking and upsetting. It is often surprising. Let's go back to our dream of the thread factory:

> My bike goes into a gully because I was distracted by looking at the building.

Her fascination with the old building draws her attention away from where she is going and stops her forward movement. When the dream ego

is reminded of a lost capacity for connection with herself, a crisis occurs: she rides into a gully. The dream ego has been reminded of what is gone, and this new awareness stops her in her tracks. The egoic "bike riding" attitude won't carry her.

Key: Identify the crisis in the dream.

- What's the high point of the action?
- What is your dream maker emphasizing?
- What seems to be at stake?
- What change has occurred or will be required?

Resolution—the Last Word

The action of a dream drama ideally leads to a resolution that makes for a satisfying and complete story. When there is a resolution, we can assume that it pictures the solution to a problem—and the problem is usually the ego attitude. Even if an ending seems enigmatic or unrelated to the preceding content, it is often the dream maker's answer to the problematic situation and indicates a new orientation.

> Dream symbols are the essential message carriers from the instinctive to the rational parts of the human mind, and their interpretation enriches the poverty of consciousness so that it learns to understand again the forgotten language of the instincts.
>
> —C. G. Jung

Marie-Louise von Franz encourages us to pay particular attention to the last sentence of the dream text. It can be seen as the dream maker's answer to the question that has been posed.[3] The final image may also picture an answer. What emotions are associated with the dream's ending? Does it feel triumphant? Satisfying? Inevitable? When the resolution feels positive, the

dream is often confirming that we are on the right course. Dream endings often feel surprising, which points to an increase in consciousness.[4] We have encountered something new. When we have a dream that has a definite final message, we usually awaken with the feeling we've been told something important. Even if the ending doesn't make logical sense, it has an emotional "aha" quality. A dream with a clear resolution gives the dream ego a different—even if puzzling—perspective on the dream situation.

Final Situation

Now is also the time to take notice of what's changed over the course of the dream. Every dream is a message from the dream maker that nudges you incrementally forward toward individuation. Therefore, every dream is meant to shift your outlook at least a little, so it is important to note what changes occur. How does the final situation differ from the initial one? A dream with a clear resolution will usually leave the dream ego in a changed state. As in a good literary work, the protagonist undergoes some development between the covers of the book. Ask yourself how your dream ego has changed from the beginning. Notice other alterations as well. Is there a different setting? Has the cast of characters changed?

Here is the conclusion to "The Old Thread Factory":

I have to get off my bike and walk it out of the gully.

The dream ego is no longer on her bike and the young man has disappeared. As she confronts the lost connection to herself that is the old thread factory, how she goes through the world changes. She has lost contact with a companioning male energy and must temporarily slow down. The dream ends with a minor catastrophe. Such endings indicate that a positive resolution to the situation pictured in the dream is unlikely.[5] The conclusion to this dream seems to suggest that the dreamer may be entering a period of depression caused by a dawning awareness of old losses. In fact, the dreamer had been feeling blue and a bit lost at the time she had this dream. Importantly, the dream also reminds her of a capacity for connection.

Not surprisingly, many dreams lack a clear resolution. The dream maker presents the problem or question, offers some thoughts about its development, lets the action rise to a crescendo—and then leaves us hanging. Such a dream is likely to indicate that the path ahead is not yet clear or that the unconscious doesn't have an answer. Dreams without a solid ending often show an inner situation that is still developing. Like a TV serial, subsequent "episodes" will have more to say. Here is a dream without a resolution:

Charging Velociraptors

I'm in a small arboretum, and a small, gray velociraptor, maybe the size of a house cat, with no eyes, charges me from the top of a terraced arrangement of small bushes and moss. I smack it with my hand to one side. It's too small to be a serious threat, but my adrenaline is up. It keeps charging and I keep smacking it away, over and over. I start smacking it harder and eventually smack it clear across the room and knock it into the far wall. It doesn't seem deterred or damaged by any of these strikes and simply resumes its charge each time. Eventually it stops pursuing me. Now an orange clone of this animal appears. I know this one is about to start charging at me, too.

The blind velociraptor seems to have the jump on the dream ego—it charges from the top of terraced plantings. Blindness is often associated with lack of consciousness, as in "she was blind to the consequences" or "he was in blind pursuit." The psychic situation in this dream setting has a sci-fi tone: an Edenic, arboreal world is invaded by primordial, predatory animal life. When the dream ego retaliates, another attack occurs, implying velociraptors will keep coming . . . but what's the poor guy to do? We will have to stay tuned.

Key: Pay attention to the dream's resolution—or lack thereof.

- Is the dream situation resolved?

- If so, what change in the ego attitude does the resolution seem to suggest?
- How is the final situation different from the initial situation?
- What is the final sentence of the dream text, and how is this the answer to the question your dream maker has asked?
- What is the final image? What emotional tone does it evoke? How does it relate to the main theme explored in the dream?
- If there is no resolution, what are the unanswered questions? What seems to be hanging in the balance?

Role

No dramatic production is complete without its star performer. Most of the time, this will be your dream ego. Pay attention to how you have been cast. Are you the hero or a fool? The victim or the savior? Or a lover, unrequited or otherwise? Often our dream role is similar to roles that we adopt in waking life. The role of the dream ego often corresponds to how we see ourselves, providing us with crucial information about how we are facing a given situation.

Consider the following dream of a man in his forties who was trained as a lawyer and used his skills to advocate for the poor and disenfranchised. The dream occurred during a time of heightened activity in his mission-driven work.

T. Rex

I am a member of a four-man team. We are a special ops unit, and we have a mission. We must get a drop of either blood or saliva from a T. rex. He is reluctant and tells us he is too old, but I know that he can be convinced.

The dream ego is in the role of hero, one of a team of specially trained operatives on a dangerous but critical mission. The dream ego's role as hero corresponds to the dreamer's heroic attitude toward his work. The dream

ego and his team members require the blood or saliva of the T. rex, an image of a primordial life force of unimaginable power. To get it requires courage, cunning, and the right attitude toward the unconscious. This heroic mission is likely to succeed. The dreamer's waking ego attitude was realistic, adaptive, and in line with the imperatives of individuation—all reasons why the quest is auspicious.

A woman in her forties was assigned a dream role that echoed one she played with her partner in waking life. The dreamer's relationship was notable for its conflict and power dynamics.

Cowed and Ashamed

I'm in bed but I can't sleep. I know I shouldn't look at my phone, but I do. I am reading on my phone in bed when Julie comes in. She begins shouting at me, saying that she can't believe I would go on my phone in the middle of the night. She is screaming at me, berating me. I feel cowed and ashamed and don't know how to defend myself.

Here, the dream ego has been cast in the role of hapless victim. Her shame over her poor choice renders her mute and helpless when attacked by her partner. The dream ego's role mirrored a waking-life dynamic. The dreamer's partner criticized her ruthlessly for small transgressions. Because there was a grain of merit in her partner's accusations, the dreamer often felt guilty, thus not entitled to defend herself. By casting the dream ego in the role of victim, the dream maker showed the dreamer that her shame over minor mistakes was out of proportion and created a problematic dynamic in her waking-life relationship where her partner had too much power.

Key: Ask yourself what role you've been cast in.

- What is the role of your dream ego? Hero, victim, leader, follower, fixer, observer, trickster, and lover are a few possibilities.
- Does your role in the dream mirror one you play in waking life?
- Does the dream indicate that there might be a problem with this role?

Journaling Prompt

What is your role in the dream? Where in your waking life do you play this role? Is this role working for you in the dream? Does it work for you in waking life? In what ways does it not work?

Dream Dramatic Devices

The dream maker stages complex performances replete with multiple layers of meaning. Traditional playwrights use devices such as soliloquy, dramatic irony, and paradox. The dream maker uses different devices to highlight themes, focus attention, and reveal hidden patterns.

When/Then

The dream is a miniature universe in which all elements are dynamically related to one another. In dreams, therefore, sequence often implies that one thing leads to another, meaning that dream events can be understood to have been "caused" by whatever happened previously. We infer causality and assume that the action pictured in the second scene resulted from what happened immediately before it. Jungian analyst Patricia Berry calls this "when/then," and her approach can help to make meaning of seemingly nonsensical shifts.[6] For example, in "The Old Thread Factory," *when* the dream ego gets distracted by the view of the factory, *then* she winds up in a gully and has to move forward on foot. In psychological language, *when* she reconnects with a forgotten ability to make connections, *then* the way she is moving through the world won't work anymore and she therefore falls into a gully of minor depression.

When/then is a key tool in your interpretive toolbox, helping to make sense of the relationship between any sequential dream happenings. It is especially useful in the case of the abrupt, baffling shifts for which dreams are famous. Dreams jump suddenly from place to place and change players with abandon. Rabbits become dogs, classrooms turn into fishing piers, and a cabin in the woods becomes a doctor's waiting room. When/then, like a bottle opener, can pop open connections between seemingly disconnected dream events.

When/then helps us understand the following woman's dream:

An Upside-Down House

I get a phone call from my friend, who tells me she had the best night out at this great place, and she invites me to meet her there. I arrive, and it turns out to be a hair salon. She sits on my left side and the hairdresser tends to her, not taking much notice of me. He wants to apply to my friend's hair this special natural hair dye that he invented. He says that he doesn't think that it will work for me. His female assistant arrives and asks me to write down three wishes. I am distracted, so I just write something down and realize that one of the wishes is for "an upside-down house." The scene changes and I am in a very tight and small house on stilts with my nine-year-old son. The people from the previous scene have placed spiced cake and mushrooms for us to eat on a plate. I have one piece of the very tasty cake, wondering if my son is going to try some, but doubting it. I try to reach for more cake, but it's so tight and I can barely reach around to get more because my arm cannot bend far enough.

The dreamer was dissatisfied in her work life. She wanted to start her own business but was unsure whether to accept a friend's offer of partnership. An important moment in the dream occurs when the salon assistant asks her to write down three wishes, and like many a fairy tale figure, she squanders the opportunity. In traditional tales, three wishes are a fabled, archetypal image of magic and possibility—we can have whatever we imagine. The dream ego doesn't take this chance seriously. Distracted, she wishes for "an upside-down house." We infer a causal connection with what happens next. *When* she wishes for an upside-down house, *then* she is in a tight, small house, and she can't fully enjoy the cake. *When* your imagination about possibility is limited, *then* you wind up living in a way that is constrained and cuts off access to delicious things in life.

Key: Apply the when/then construction.

In dreams, sequence usually implies causation.

- When something happens in a dream, it can be useful to ask yourself, *What happened right before that might have "caused" this?*
- When there are sudden scene shifts, assume that whatever occurred right before the shift caused the change. One thing leads to the next. Apply when/then and see if it opens understanding.

Repetition

It's common for a word, image, or action to be repeated in a dream. A dream may record redundant descriptors, like a dream set in a *library* at a *university* to do *research*. The dream maker is ensuring that the dreamer will get the concept of learning and study. A woman's dream could include multiple images of the feminine: talking to her sister, feeding her baby daughter, and fighting with her mother. Although word choices arise from consciousness when we write down dreams, they come from an internal space that is closely connected with the dream world. Therefore, pay attention to words that are repeated in your dream text.

Repetition enables the dream maker to emphasize a psychic theme. Noting repetition can help you make connections between seemingly disparate elements. Let's look at repetition in the following dream from a forty-six-year-old woman:

Special Healing

I am at the entrance of a hospital in the US. There are two women—immigrants and cleaning ladies—there, fixing the entrance with white cement. I look at how they are working with this kind of white clay on the floor. One woman is older than the other and more experienced. I enter the building. I have an appointment with a well-known psychologist. I go to the second floor and see him downstairs, very worried, looking for his parrot. I see the parrot on the roof. It is beautiful, light blue. Its beak calls my attention. I shout, "It is there, I found it." Then I enter the psychologist's office quickly. I sit on a chair. I close my eyes. After a couple of minutes, he tells me, "Okay, why are you here?" I'm surprised. I had not noticed he was there. I apologize. He tells me to do some relaxing exercise with my arms. I want to talk, but he interrupts

me. He says that a psychiatric patient must be brought to this room for some special healing. Two nurses bring in this woman lying in a bed. I'm afraid—she looks dangerous. They are going to put her in another room, but the doctor says she must be placed behind me. I'm scared. I think she might kill me. She's crazy.

This dream contains a subtle pattern of "twoness": two immigrant cleaning ladies, two nurses, and the dream ego and her psychotic counterpart. Like a leitmotif in music, the doubling of these images connects the dream's symbolic theme. Since all these pairs of characters (and the dreamer) are female, a relationship between the psychotic patient and the dream ego is implied. The necessary confrontation with the shadowy patient cannot be avoided. Though the parrot and the interaction with the psychologist also warrant exploration, the repetition of "two" helps us understand a key feature of the dream.

Key: Look for repetition.

Note repeating figures and situations in dreams.

- Look for repeated words, images, themes, figures, colors, numbers, and so forth.
- What is your dream maker trying to highlight?
- What seemingly disparate parts may go together?

Hyperbole and Humor

The dream maker is nothing if not dramatic! It revels in overstatement. Like a skillful pantomime actor, the dream maker sometimes exaggerates to make sure we get the message, as in the following dream of a woman in her forties:

Imprisoned by Hitler

I'm with Terry. She and I are prisoners in a camp run by Hitler.

The dreamer noted that her friend Terry had a hard time accepting her own anger and aggression, an issue the dreamer also recognized in herself. The dream maker used a highly exaggerated image of aggression—Hitler—to show the dreamer that she is imprisoned by her difficulty with anger. Because dream images are sometimes frightening or disconcerting, remembering the dream maker's penchant for overstatement can help us keep its messages in perspective.

The dream maker has a lively sense of humor. Some dreams make us laugh with their absurd imagery, playful spirit, or clever commentary. In later life, Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz had the following dream:

> Just the other day . . . I was very ill and revolting against my illness, and I dreamt that I was at a festival to greet old soldiers coming home from military service. And as they handed in their carpenter's tools, I saw that they were terribly old. They were a hundred years old, and somebody said into my ear, "Yes, they have kept those people much too long in active service."

Von Franz found the dream humorous. "Now you don't need to pay an analyst to understand that dream," she commented. "At once, I drastically reduced my work load."[7]

Key: Ask yourself whether hyperbole or humor is present in the dream.

- Does your dream feature highly charged images?
- Is the dream maker using hyperbole to underscore its point?
- Is the dream maker's tone playful? Hopefully you had a laugh and got the message!

The Big Reveal: Anagnorisis

Anagnorisis is a Greek term that refers to the moment in a play or story that the main character makes a critical discovery that moves the player from

ignorance to knowledge. According to *Merriam-Webster*, "The protagonist recognizes his or her or some other character's true identity or discovers the true nature of his or her own situation."[8] Think of the unmasking moment at the end of every episode of *Scooby-Doo*, or the moment that Darth Vader tells Luke that he is his father. At the moment of anagnorisis, the root of the problem or crisis has been revealed. Dreams can show such instances of dawning awareness. Often these are woven into the dream's crisis, but not always. Consider the following dream of a woman in her forties:

Remembering the Lost

I become aware that I have lost a dog. I have a new dog now and I love that dog with all my heart. But now I remember that I loved my old dog with all my heart, and I am perplexed that I could forget about him. In the dream I also have a small blond son. I finally figure out where my old dog is—a friend of mine took him. She has been hiding him all along. I go to her house to get the dog and he is identical to my new one, except that he has a scarred face. When I retrieve the missing dog, I realize that this friend also took my other son, a twin of the boy that I was raising. She stole the dog so it could accompany the little boy in the first place. I am shocked by the discovery of the boy's twin and wonder how I forgot about him. Once the missing twin boy and the missing dog join me, I become aware that they make the four now. This makes me feel complete and like I finally belong to society. I think to myself, *I am finally like another friend of mine, who happens to have two sons*.

Over the course of the dream, the dream ego becomes aware of the lost and forgotten dog and son parts of herself and can reclaim them. A growing recognition and an increase in consciousness are central themes of the dream. The dream reflected important inner work in the dreamer's waking life around childhood wounds.

In dreams, anagnorisis often occurs when we become conscious of something we have split off or denied. It is frequently a moment of recognizing something we have long known on some level but have been working to forget because it is too painful to let into consciousness. This helps to explain this dreamer's confusion. She is perplexed that she could

forget about the other dog and child. The moment of anagnorisis often signals a shift from passivity to action. Knowledge and awareness create the potential for decisiveness and the agency to reclaim the dog and boy. The "big reveal" in dreams often shows us something on the cusp of awareness in waking life—dreams usually anticipate conscious developments. Such moments in dreams may herald new understanding.

Key: Note whether the dream depicts a moment of critical discovery, or anagnorisis.

- Does your dream ego make a crucial discovery that moves it from ignorance to knowledge?
- Does this discovery allow your dream ego to move from inaction or reaction to action?
- How is your dream ego changed by this new knowledge? What is its feeling state?
- How does the discovery relate to a new awareness in your waking life?
- What new understanding might be coming into consciousness in waking life?

Dialogue

Spoken dialogue in a dream can be significant. Even if strange or inscrutable to the waking mind, speech in dreams can feel noteworthy, like an oracular pronouncement from the dream maker. A woman in her thirties hoping to become pregnant dreamed the following:

Overthinking Things

I'm in my childhood home standing in line to buy a pair of shoes. The shoe designer herself is there and she will sign your shoebox. She is a middle-aged woman who is somewhat stylishly dressed. The shoes I'm buying are closed-toed sandals—a little frumpy. When I get to the front of the line, she signs my box. "You're thinking about it too much," she

tells me, and I know somehow that she is referring to my efforts to get pregnant.

Shoes relate to persona and indicate our standpoint in the world (think of the difference between stilettos and slippers). The dream ego is forfeiting style for frumpy sandals—perhaps associated with motherhood. The middle-aged designer may be an image of the wise woman. She pithily diagnoses the dream ego's problem: "You're thinking about it too much." This statement could have two subtly different but overlapping meanings. On the one hand, she might be delivering the comforting message that the dreamer should relax and let nature take its course. On the other hand, the dream maker may be letting the dreamer know that her tendency to ruminate about potential fertility issues could itself be a problem. Either way, the dreamer is invited to relax her ego-oriented, cognitive approach to the issue. Words spoken by the wise woman represent counsel from the unconscious; words spoken by non-ego elements are often direct statements of the dream maker.

Words spoken by your dream ego tend to convey the dominant ego attitude—the dream maker's way of alerting us to an outlook that may be askew. Here is the dream of a forty-five-year-old woman administrator:

Four Doors

I have just urgently entered a space from outside with the fear of something coming. I realize that I need to check the doors to make sure they are locked. I say, "We must gird our loins," as I move to do this. On the wall to the outside, there are three doors. I check the doors one at a time, moving from left to right. They are all locked. I then notice there is a fourth door to the right of the first three. It is perpendicular to the first three and is the same type of door. I check that it is locked and it opens, and I become fearful that the bad things (spirits?) will get inside. I can see that it opens into another room. There isn't a lock on any of the four doors on my side, so I feel around to the other side of the fourth door to see if there is a lock I can turn. There isn't. I attempt to shut the door and feel a strong force trying to keep the door open. I finally get it shut but it

opens again, and I stand and glare into the room, waiting for the scary thing to come in.

The dream ego is focused on keeping something out. Her statement, "We must gird our loins," is biblical and refers to men belting their robes to prepare for action or battle. The dream maker uses words to highlight the dreamer's defensive attitude toward whatever wants to enter. Meanwhile, the unconscious presents the curious image of a perpendicular door. There's a new perspective that's 180 degrees different. Perhaps it's connected with the content that frightens the dream ego. The dream maker uses dialogue to highlight the dreamer's defensive attitude toward the new thing that is seeking integration.

Key: Note instances of dialogue, whether spoken by your dream ego or by non-ego elements.

- Words spoken by dream figures other than your dream ego may be your dream maker's way of emphasizing a message.
- Words spoken by your dream ego can give us a clear picture of how your dream maker sees the ego attitude.

Opposites

Look for opposites in dreams: powerful/helpless, running/crawling, connection/antagonism, cold/hot. The dream maker uses polarities to highlight the psychic situation, so when you find opposites in a dream, notice the feeling tone and your dream ego's attitude. Remember the "Silk Dresses" dream from chapter 3? This dream imaged opposites as silk dresses and patchwork dresses, with the beleaguered dream ego able to access only shabby garb. The dream maker used images of sisters to represent disconnected opposites in the dreamer: one was oblivious and entitled; the other felt disregarded and unworthy. These opposites, if integrated, can become healthy assertiveness and self-esteem rather than grandiosity and resentment.

When we cannot acknowledge opposites consciously, allowing each side to have its full say, they split apart and become exaggerated. Then the dream maker calls our attention to an imbalance that is detrimental to individuation. Symptoms, nightmares, and lingering bad moods warn of psychological lopsidedness. Jung repeatedly stressed the importance of holding the tension of opposites—the tension of anxiety, ambivalence, and uncertainty. Holding the tension, versus making a premature choice, leads to a creative resolution that consciousness hasn't anticipated.

A twenty-five-year-old woman bus driver had a dream that contained a generative image of opposites very different from the "Silk Dresses" dream:

The Two Birds

My fiancé and I were in our bedroom getting ready for bed. He opens this box that two birds fly into. One was very colorful and beautiful and was female, the other was plain-looking with darker colors and was male. My fiancé tells me that when he gets up to go to work in the morning, he lets the birds out but only one goes with him while he is gone, and it's the colorful female bird. He then says that the bird always comes back with him.

The dream occurred shortly after the dreamer's engagement, and she reported a feeling of natural rhythm and ease. The two birds—opposite in sex, color, and daily activity—unite in their box each night. The dream's imagery and feeling tone convey a creative, peaceful union of opposites that may refer to the dreamer's outer-world partnership and a potential inner development.

Key: Consider whether there are opposites.

Opposites can reveal dynamic tensions and potential blockages in the psyche, or a creative resolution to a tension.

- Where are there opposites in the dream?
- How do they relate to each other?

- What is your dream ego's relationship to each aspect of the polarity —friendliness, fear, or something else?
- Where does such a polarity occur in your life right now?

Other Dream Structures

Many dreams will not fit neatly into the dramatic structure we discussed above. When dreams have a clear beginning, middle, and end, they are likely to be good examples of "theater dreams," those that tell a single story. Noting the dramatic structure of such dreams can help you perceive important patterns and attend to the relationship between the dream's disparate parts. But what about dreams that seem to have a different pattern? Many dreams are less like well-crafted dramas and more like a series of seemingly disconnected scenes. Nevertheless, much can be discerned by considering how the various scenes relate to one another. Dreams that contain multiple scenes may conform to certain patterns, such as the ones that we see in painting and music. The dream maker, it turns out, is not just a playwright but also an artist and songwriter.

Diptychs and Triptychs

Some dreams don't have a sweeping dramatic arc. They may be a series of staccato scenes that can appear dramatically different from one another. It can be helpful to think of these dreams as paintings rather than dramas.

Paintings from the Middle Ages were often rendered as diptychs or triptychs—two or three painted panels joined together. The panels show related scenes: a temporal sequence or alternative perspectives on the same subject. Hieronymus Bosch, a Flemish artist, produced several renowned triptychs. *The Garden of Earthly Delights* shows Eden on the leftmost panel, earthly debauchery on the center panel, and hell on the rightmost panel. Although the scenes are different, the panels depict parts of the same theme: paradise lost and its consequences. *The Garden of Earthly Delights* even appears to show the same landscape under dramatically different conditions—there is a body of water in approximately the same position in each panel. When we have dreams with two or three separate scenes, there

is a good chance these are all commenting on the same issue from different perspectives.

Consider the following dream of a woman in her forties who works as an artist.

Unworthy

I'm in the backseat with my childhood friend Marcy. Her father is driving and her mother is in the passenger seat. It is night and everything is pitch-black outside. I feel small and unworthy but grateful to be going with them.

Then I'm at the beach on a sunny day. Everyone is in the water but I'm on the side because I don't have a snorkel. My husband comes and sits down next to me wearing a wet suit, and this snaps me out of it. I go into the water and am helping a young girl as she dives down to the bottom and pops back up, retrieving something from the ocean floor.

I've lost my license and I think I might have left it at the arts-and-crafts store. I ask a young employee at the back of the store if they have a lost and found. She tells me to reach all the way under the bottom shelf and pull out the bag I'll find there. There are two other pretty young women with her. I get down on my stomach and retrieve the bag. It's small and black. I empty it and numerous pearls fall out but no license! I tell the women that I am leaving on a plane tomorrow. How will I do this without my license? I need to leave to keep searching, but as I near the front of the store, it doesn't feel right to go. I return to the back of the store and find the women again. I ask them for their numbers so that we can be in touch. I really like them. One of the women writes a list of names and numbers on a whiteboard. I think that they are planning something, maybe a wedding. I sit down to watch and listen. A handsome young man briefly appears. Is he the groom? I look down at the floor. In the place where I emptied the bag of pearls, there is now a swaddled, sleeping baby boy. I am really surprised. He is rosy and beautiful. I'd love to hold him but I don't know who he belongs to.

The dream consists of three different scenes, each taking place in different settings. It's not clear how they are related until we ask what they

have in common. Each scene features a feeling of not quite belonging. The three vignettes offer a different perspective on being an outsider. In the first, there is a childlike passivity, a feeling of being unworthy to be there, but also a sense of gratitude to be included. The darkness outside the car and her position in the back seat emphasize her lack of agency.

When the dream ego sits on the beach, she alone is unequipped to go into the water. Perhaps she is feeling a bit sorry for herself, but her husband's appearance knocks her out of her self-imposed isolation. Now, she moves from passive to active. The dream ego can then companion a young part of herself engaged in retrieving something from the depths.

The final scene begins with the loss of her license—a form of personal identification that can symbolize our social identity, something like persona. She goes to the craft store (where she buys her cheap art supplies) to try to restore this but is directed to a bag that contains only pearls. Symbolically, pearls are related to that of supreme value. In the New Testament, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a "pearl of great price"[9] that inspired a man to sell all he had to purchase it. In contrast, the dream ego overlooks the richness of the pearls that have fallen in her lap and remains focused on finding her lost identity. In a similar way, she discounts the sense of connection she has found with the two women in the store. She is prepared to leave them in search of her missing ID. The dream ego appears to be too attached to her old outsider identity, one that leaves her feeling small and unworthy. Focusing on this old ID keeps her from a soulful connection. Happily, she once again finds a sense of active agency. She recognizes it doesn't feel right to walk away from this possible friendship, and she returns. Her reward is the baby who has sprung from the pearls, though she is not quite ready to claim him.

In scenes 2 and 3, she is initially preoccupied by what she lacks—a snorkel, her license—and this keeps her from reaching for what she wants —to be in the water, to connect with the two women. Interestingly, in the first scene where the dream ego is most childlike, she is aware of a lack—a sense of worthiness—while still being able to feel gratitude for being included. The dream appears to be offering three distinct "takes" on the dreamer's relationship to a feeling of "outsiderness," gently showing her that it is self-imposed. The dream may reflect a temporal sequence, perhaps showing this theme at various points in her life.

Consider the dream of a fifty-five-year-old-man who worked as a physician:

The Diamond and the Bear

There is a loose diamond somewhere outside. My plan to find the diamond is to wait until it snows and then shovel the snow and bring it inside and let it melt so that the diamond is revealed. I look outside and see that there is a light dusting of snow on the patio. I am getting ready to shovel it. Then there is an enormous bear. A dog chases the bear, and the bear runs away. The dog chases the bear into the house. I am in the house with the bear, frightened. I am trying to corral the bear into the front room so that I can open the door and let it out.

The dream consists of two scenes that don't seem related: the plan to retrieve the diamond and the intrusion of the bear. However, if we assume that both scenes address the same theme, like Bosch's painting, we find meaning. In the first scene, something small with monetary value is "loose." The dream ego contrives a painstaking plan to find it and move it from "outside" to "inside." *Ice* is slang for diamonds—is some important value lost in the cold?

Although the second scene seems a stark contrast with the first, the theme of outside-to-inside repeats, indicating that *diamond* and *bear* are different aspects of the same psychic principle. This time, however, it is a bear that is "outside," and it is not wanted "inside." Nevertheless, a dog chases the bear into the house. Bears carry powerful archetypal energy. Sacred symbols of resurrection, bears were messengers of the forest spirits in shamanism. Unlike the careful dream ego who wants to bring in all the snow from outside to find a small object, the instinctual dog aspect of the dreamer has a more direct plan. As is often the case, an animal part of the psyche seems to know just what to do. It chases instinctual bear energy into the house. When the dream ego is overly rigid and methodical, then the dog part of the psyche brings wild life, though the dream ego is not quite ready for this encounter.

> To me dreams are part of nature, which harbors no intention to deceive, but expresses something as best it can.
>
> —C. G. Jung

The following dream of a woman in her forties illustrates how different "panels" can overlay one another, providing dimensionality and emphasis. The dreamer had emigrated from a country in which there was significant unrest.

The Balcony and the Bakery

I'm watering plants on the balcony of an apartment building. A gray kitten is stubbornly clinging to my ankles. I yell at it to stay away from me. Below, there is a riot in the street. Across the street is a bakery with a long line of people outside waiting to buy bread. They will be safe from the riot inside the bakery, but the bakery can only let one person in at a time. I hear shots in the distance. I go inside and make sure to leave the kitten outside.

The two overlapping scenes in the dream—the balcony and the bakery—both feature someone or something trying to get inside for safety and nourishment. The dreamer felt disgust for the kitten, and it reminded her of the derelict home of a drug-addicted family friend populated by innumerable feral cats. Though the dream ego cares for the plants on her balcony, she rejects the more pressing and stubborn needs of the kitten. As the child of drug-addicted parents, the dreamer had learned early on that having needs was dangerous and even disgusting. The scene in the street below mirrors and emphasizes the themes of vulnerability, neediness, and lack. Many people are waiting for bread, and they are alert to the chaos and violence in the street. Though there is a bakery—an image, perhaps, of maternal protection and nurture—only one person at a time can access the safety and nourishment it provides. Like the kitten, the people are persistent and willing to take a risk to seek nourishment and care. The dream provides an image of resilience that the dreamer connected with being an immigrant. In the dream, she smells the delicious aroma of the traditional bread and her

hunger for it is awakened. “From the safety of the US, I can now look back and be nourished by my culture,” she noted.

Two or more distinct scenes in a dream often address the same subject, albeit from different vantage points. Similarly, if you recall more than one dream in the same night, they are likely to address the same psychological concern. If you have a dream with disconnected scenes, ask what elements they have in common. Like *The Garden of Earthly Delights* or the classic Akira Kurosawa film *Rashomon*, the dream may be giving you different versions of the same content. Then note how these layered perspectives create a three-dimensional view of the issue being addressed. Getting different views on the same subject can help us pinpoint the problem and deepen our understanding.

Key: Is your dream organized like a diptych or a triptych?

- Does your dream have two or three scenes that are seemingly disjointed? Consider whether they are commenting on the same theme from different perspectives.
- What do the dream scenes have in common? Finding the common theme may help you “triangulate” information to reveal your dream maker’s point.
- What happens if you assume that they are multiple versions of the same theme?
- Where is this theme in your life currently?

Verse, Chorus, and Bridge

Some dreams feature as many as four, five, or more dream scenes. Longer, more complex dreams featuring unrelated scenes are harder to interpret. It can help to see if they form a pattern, like those found in music. Popular songs are built on patterns such as verse, chorus, verse, chorus: ABAB. Some songs feature two verses between each chorus—AABAAB; some songs have a pattern interspersed by a bridge: ABCAB. Dream patterns can

be difficult to find (or missing), but look for repeating emotional themes, behaviors, and images.

Let's consider a dream with a "musical" structure:

Peanut Butter Toffee Egg

I am finishing up the school year and will be moving to a different school. It is the last day and we must gather all our things from the dormitories.

I go into the auditorium and there are many people around. I see a tall, beautiful man. I feel drawn to him, and we are talking and I cuddle up closer to him. He smells good and his skin is soft. We snuggle a bit and then I must go and finish up in the dormitory.

I go back to the dormitory and I am crying and crying as I try to gather all my things. I feel so much grief at the ending of school.

Some older women wheel in an enormous sculpture made of chocolate, toffee, and peanut butter in the shape of an egg. I use a spade to dig out a big bite for myself.

I go outside on the lawn with lots of people, and I run right into this grandmother who is holding her grandchild in her arms. I bang into her from behind and the baby flies into the air. I hold the grandmother and steady her and make sure the grandchild is not injured. I help the grandmother sit down, and I pick up the grandchild and put her in the grandmother's lap. The grandmother says she has no idea what just happened. I am not courageous enough to tell her that I caused that accident with my impulsiveness and recklessness. Everyone is okay but the grandmother wants my phone number. I avoid giving it to her.

I want to find the tall, beautiful man again. I find him and hope we can exchange phone numbers, but am clear that I am not going to be the one to ask. We try a little kiss. Both of our lips are very dry and he says, "Well, you are probably smelling my cigarette breath." I tell him that he is probably smelling my peanut butter breath.

At first glance, this dream seems to meander. It would be difficult to fit this dream into a typical dramatic structure, but breaking it up into scenes

reveals a pattern that can help us unlock the dream's meaning. With such a structure, it's helpful to identify and write down each scene.

A—Scene 1: Clearing out the dormitories for departure.

B—Scene 2: Snuggling with the beautiful man.

A—Scene 3: Back to the dormitories—to collect possessions and crying.

B—Scene 4: Giant egg made of chocolate, toffee, and peanut butter.

C—Scene 5: Banging into the grandmother with grandchild.

B—Scene 6: Back with the beautiful man and kiss.

Scenes 1 and 3 (A) take place in the dormitories and are marked by feelings of finality and grief. Scenes 2 and 4 (B) feature the dreamer partaking in sensual delight—cuddling with the beautiful, sweet-smelling man, and eating the delicious, over-the-top chocolate sculpture. Scene 5 (C) is different—an encounter with the grandmother and child and an attempt to ignore her responsibility. Scene 6 (B) returns to the beautiful man, but this time the connection is not as pleasurable—their lips are dry and they have bad breath.

This dream has an ABABCB structure and helps us see a possible current theme: an effort to avoid the grief of endings by indulging in pleasure and fantasy. The dreamer was going through a divorce and feeling relief, sadness, and guilt. In the early part of the dream, the dream ego doesn't stay in a sad place (A) for very long but finds delightful distraction (B). However, the encounter with the grandmother (C) highlights a sense of culpability: the end of her marriage will cause her young child distress. There is a wish to avoid taking responsibility for the painful situation and a desire to return to the pleasant encounter (B), but this time, it is less satisfying. Dawning consciousness has drained the fantasy of its potency.

The following dream of a twenty-six-year-old man features a slightly different pattern:

Nooses

I'm at my parents' house. I walk to the mailbox and glimpse a set of keys on the gravel. These keys belong to someone else. I put them on top of

the mailbox hoping their owner will see them. I hear conservative radio drifting up from the houses across the street and feel uneasy. There's a pond in our backyard. I ask myself what's the biggest fish in the pond? Then I remember that we have an alligator who lives there. I see the friendly gator walking across the front lawn. Suddenly a lion, with a dark mane, lunges at him. I watch the two animals fighting, and the alligator kills the lion. I feel a sense of relief. Now I'm on a train. I'm carrying my guitar and nothing else. I think a guitar is like a suitcase. I'm having trouble finding a place to sit and wander between the cars. The other passengers are all old friends and acquaintances from high school and college. The scene changes. We're at a party in the woods on a remote mountain range. I'm thinking I need to get home. I'm lying next to a young woman and we embrace, watching the sun begin to rise through the trees. I feel a sense of ecstasy and start to weep. Her mother is also with us. I'm overwhelmed by the beauty of this moment. This ecstasy is tinged with a sense of separateness from the person next to me, although our bodies are so close. Now we're on a chair lift. We're rising up through the trees. Although the sun had risen before, it is now pitch-black outside. I realize we're completely alone in the mountains. Suddenly the lift stops abruptly in front of a tree branch. Hanging from the branch is a row of knotted nooses.

The dream shifts sharply between disconnected scenes that lack coherence, making it difficult to find a connecting thread. However, if we look for thematic similarities in the dream scenes, meaning begins to emerge:

A—Scene 1: Dropped keys, feeling uneasy.

B—Scene 2: Alligator kills lion, feeling relief.

A—Scene 3: Can't find a seat on train; old friends don't make room.

A—Scene 4: Party in woods, embracing woman, feeling separateness.

B—Scene 5: Dark outside, hanging nooses, feeling shock.

Scenes 1, 3, and 4 (A) show lack of connection: dropped keys, looking for a seat on the train, and the embrace tinged with separateness. Scenes 2

and 5 (B) seem to point to danger. The dream ego believes the alligator in the backyard is friendly, though it just devoured a lion. What—or who—might be next? In the last scene, ominous nooses finally jolt the dream ego out of its obliviousness. The dream ends with a strong statement that serves to shock the ego out of its complacency and underscores the message of potential danger. This dream, then, has an ABAAB structure. We might wonder how the theme of missed connections relates to the theme of unanticipated danger. Perhaps the dream maker is saying, *When you can't connect with yourself, then there is trouble ahead*. The dream only begins to reveal its secrets once we track the patterns the dream maker has laid down.

Key: Is the dream organized like a song, with verse, chorus, and bridge?

- Does your dream have many scenes? Note commonalities in different scenes and see if you can map the structure. Your dream maker may make its point much like a musical idea is developed over the course of a song.
- Do scenes share common themes? How do they relate to one another?
- Could they have a cause-and-effect connection?
- How might the themes in the dream relate to your life now?

Chain-Reaction Dreams

Some dreams are so chaotic that it is difficult to find a narrative thread or even a pattern. They may depict a series of escalating events: one bad thing leads to the next usually worse thing. The dream ego can't maintain its usual coherence and agency, and it ricochets around like a ball in a pinball machine. Jung called these "reaction dreams," and Danish Jungian analyst Ole Vedfelt calls them "chain-reaction dreams." According to Vedfelt, such dreams may "also reflect a self-destructive line of thinking in a waking state of which the dreamer is not conscious."[10] Such a dream may also out-picture the chaos of unresolved trauma.

Here is a chain-reaction dream from a thirty-nine-year-old woman:

Crazy Ride

I'm with Josh at an amusement park. We're standing in line for the roller coaster but then I have to go to the bathroom, so I leave. I can't find a bathroom anywhere. When I finally find a bathroom, the door on the stall won't stay closed. Another woman comes in while I'm on the toilet. I tell her to leave, but she says she doesn't mind waiting, and she just stands there. Then I'm at some kind of banquet with my whole family. Uncle Rick is there, and he wants me to eat his potato salad. He keeps asking me about it, but I don't know what to answer him because the potato salad is at the other end of the table. I keep asking for people to pass it to me but it keeps not getting passed. Then I'm supposed to be going to Carol's wedding. I know that Johnny is waiting for me and I'm nervous that I'm late. We're driving in a car very fast, taking all kinds of turns. I'm being sloshed around the back of the car, but I keep telling the driver to go faster because I'm worried I won't get there in time.

The overall sense of the dream is frantic, ineffective activity. There is frustration, failure, and confusion. The dream ego struggles with disjointed situations occurring without cause or reason: it is just so. Although using when/then may open some insights, the many confusing scene shifts obfuscate thematic meaning. Such dreams are notable for their chaotic flavor and distinct lack of narrative cohesion. They don't yield easily to interpretive efforts. It may be most important to pay attention to feeling and tone, and to note that the dream may be alerting us to chaotic experiences in waking life. We can also attend to the recurring theme of lack of resolution in each scene. Such dreams often reflect poor boundaries, overwhelming emotions, and a weakened ego. Jung said such dreams reproduce highly charged negative experiences, like a phonograph needle stuck in a groove. With work, their energy usually wanes and symbolic meaning slowly replaces chaotic concreteness. In re-membering, re-collecting, and re-viewing events, we render sensate experience and feelings into story through memory, imagination, and meaning.

Key: Read the feeling tone of chain-reaction dreams.

- Is your dream full of chaotic and confusing imagery?
- Note the feeling tone in the dream. Are you facing a similar emotional experience in your waking life?

The dream maker is a prolific artist. It constructs multiple productions for us every night—masterpieces of psychological insight that use particular settings and characters to enact psychic situations. Dreams link ideas and images and move them in ways our conscious minds find surprising to make a point. We can step outside our usual frames of reference and see how the bones of a psychic situation are connected, helping us divine the message of the dream maker.

7

Time and Telos

Past, Present, and Future

Dreams prepare, announce, or warn about certain situations, often long before they actually happen. This is not necessarily a miracle or a precognition. Most crises or dangerous situations have a long incubation, only the conscious mind is not aware of it. Dreams can betray the secret.

—C. G. Jung

Dreams provide remarkably accurate information about the state of our inner world. Most of the time, they provide a snapshot of the current psychic situation, offering a nightly report on how we are doing with everyday matters. One woman dreamed of a pot of pasta boiling over on the stove, leaving a sticky mess. She had had an argument with her teenage daughter, and the dream depicted a "hot mess" that was nonetheless not catastrophic. However, dreams can also give us a window into the past and future. With just a few images, dreams can pinpoint causal factors in a conflict or challenge, provide an overview of the present situation, and indicate likely future developments.

As far as we can tell, the dream maker does not experience time the way consciousness does. Jung wrote,

> We cannot apply our notion of time to the unconscious. Our consciousness can conceive of things only in temporal succession, our time is, therefore, essentially linked to the chronological sequence. In the unconscious this is different, because there everything lies together, so to speak. To some extent, in the unconscious we all still live in the past; in a way we are still very little children, and often only very little is needed for the "child" to come to the surface. At the same time, we are standing in the shadow cast by a future, of which we still know

nothing, but which is already somehow anticipated by the unconscious.[1]

In dreams, past, present, and future are all alive at the same moment. Time is fluid, and images from the past blend easily into present and future.

Unfinished Business: Past Is Present

Dreams freely mix past and present: people routinely dream of being in their childhood home as adults, living in a previous era, or wearing clothing from the past. Time warps that would seem perplexing in waking life are taken for granted in the dream world.

Some dreams direct us to the hidden source of a current difficulty. They may reference elements from earlier life to show how past attitudes may be maladaptive in the present. If your dream contains past elements, ask yourself if a current challenge bears any relationship to the time referenced. The appearance of a younger self or children in dreams can be an invitation from the dream maker to look back. It isn't uncommon to dream of younger versions of ourselves and others. Dreams that take place in our childhood home may reflect an old attitude or point to a complex originating in early family dynamics. Notice your emotional reaction, including a vague sense of recognition, and ask yourself if the dream depicts an emotional or behavioral dynamic from that time. These images can be the dream maker's way of calling attention to what about "then" can shed light on "now."

A woman in her forties had the following dream:

Dust in the Lungs

I've just graduated from college and am living in a new apartment building. I discover that they have been doing renovations or adding another floor above us. They haven't told us or taken the proper precautions by sealing off the vents. Now our apartment is covered with fine dust. I worry that it is silica dust and has gotten lodged in our lungs. We won't know about the damage for years, but it may become apparent when we are in the prime of life, possibly making it hard for us to breathe.

The dream referenced a carefree period in the dreamer's life: her first job and a decent paycheck. She could focus on her own needs and have fun, as she had not been able to do in high school or college because her family was not well-off and she had to work while attending school. In the first years out of college, however, she also realized that her parents couldn't pay their bills and were going into debt. She took over some of their expenses, and soon they were financially dependent on her, constraining her ability to change jobs, relocate, or explore other interests.

When she had this dream, the insidious side of her generosity was becoming apparent. In addition to supporting her aging parents, she was raising her two children and had her own financial issues. The dream pointed to the genesis of the current problem and alerted her to what had been unconscious before: harmful toxins were generated secretly, making it hard for her to breathe. At midlife, this dreamer was becoming aware of the cost of supporting her parents in her twenties. The dream used a specific period in her past to depict the problem in her present—not only financial anxiety but also outrage ("They haven't told us or taken the proper precautions . . .").

Back in School

Dreams of being back in school, typically high school or college, are common. Like all archetypes, the archetype of the student is bivalent—its opposite is the teacher. Students explore areas of interest and make social connections under the aegis of the "alma mater," the nourishing mother. Students are also subject to hierarchy: teachers have authority and parents (who may be paying the bill) have expectations. Student status promises the opportunity to develop at the cost of submitting to external values and authority.

If you dream of being back in school, did your dream depict you as receptive and replete—or, more likely, as bungling and flunking? The dream may reference regrets about unfinished business and unrealized potentials, so consider how a past matter may be present currently. Anxiety about a life situation often drags dreamers back to school for "remedial work," especially life lessons we missed learning then that are needed now. They can also be a strategic retreat to an earlier and easier time in preparation for moving ahead.

Jung found that considering causal roots alone was insufficient for understanding—he also wanted to know where a person's life was leading. The opposites of past and future seek reconciliation and synthesis. However widely separated in time, references to the past have meaning in the present and bearing on the future. Dreams of being back in school ask us to reflect on the past and move into the future. In the psyche, time is a metaphor for the process of individuation.

In another example of how past informs present, Jung worked with a man born in humble circumstances who had become very successful. He sought Jung's help because he was experiencing anxiety and unexplained dizziness, nausea, and constricted breath. The man brought a dream to analysis that Jung felt pointed to the source of the problem:

> I am back again in the small village where I was born. Some peasant lads who went to school with me are standing together in the street. I

walk past, pretending not to know them. Then I hear one of them say, pointing at me: "He doesn't often come back to our village."[2]

The dreamer had risen above his humble beginnings. Jung remarks, "The dream says quite clearly: 'You forgot how far down you began.'"[3] The man's current problem was due to having lost connection with part of himself by denying his past. More than that, his peasant origins were necessary for future development: they contained matter-of-fact clarity and simplicity that his sophisticated persona lacked.

The psyche, like a scrupulous bookkeeper, carries forward past unfinished business. Unpaid debts not only must be measured against earnings but mounting interest in the form of symptoms increases what is owed. The dream maker lets us know when our accounts are overdue. A thirty-two-year-old woman who had recently totaled her car had a dream that highlighted an emotional debt, connecting her recent car accident with a critical time in her past:

Totaled Car

I was at a childhood friend's house watching VHS tapes of Mary Kate and Ashley. In another scene, my roommate invited me to his family's house. He drove away in his car. Without telling him, I took his mother's car for a ride and got into an accident. The car was totaled. I felt terribly guilty for having taken my roommate's mom's car and was anxious they would be mad. When I told them, they forgave me. Though I offered to pay, his mom knew I didn't have the money and told me not to worry about it.

The dreamer's mother died when she was sixteen years old, and a few months later, the dreamer totaled her car. Cars often represent how we get around in life, and the totaled car may symbolize the loss of the dreamer's forward momentum due to the shattering loss of a parent. The dreamer often spends Thanksgiving with her roommate's family. The dream opens with a nostalgic reference to the past—VHS tapes and the Olsen twins, stars of a sit-com in which a widowed father raises daughters with the help of two other men. Maternal loss is outweighed by three loving men, amusing

family mishaps, and adventures. Does this dreamer tend to cover up current challenges with happy fantasies and immature behavior?

It would seem so, for *when* the dream self is watching old sit-coms, *then* she takes her roommate's mother's car without asking. The impulse to take the car—to seize the maternal momentum to move forward in life—is healthy, but the dream maker insists that she first face unfinished business around her mother's death. Her recent car accident in waking life may be a similar message from the psyche. That the dream ends with forgiveness and absolution could indicate a repetition of the tendency to gloss over difficulty or—sixteen years after her mother's death at age sixteen—a turning point. The dream maker has returned the dreamer to the past so that she can revisit it in the present with the consciousness necessary for future momentum.

Children in Dreams

Symbolically, children point backward toward birth and conception and forward to future possibilities. When a child or baby appears in a dream, the dream maker may be providing a "status report" on an inner development. Note the age of the child. What was going on for you when you were that age? What happened in your life that many years ago? If you find yourself with a newborn in a dream, consider what life event may have begun nine months before. Often we find that some important development had its genesis approximately nine months prior. Consider the following dream of a fifty-two-year-old woman who has never been pregnant:

It's Not Yet Time

I am pregnant. I am almost full term. Apparently it is time for me to go to the hospital to deliver my baby. I am confused because I feel no labor pains and no sense that the baby is supposed to be born now. I tell my wife and my mom and the people around me that it is not time. I know I am supposed to go to the hospital and be induced, but I am doing something rebellious, and I am going to wait until I start to feel contractions or cramping. I am not going to use medicine to get this baby out early. I feel scared to take this step of rebellion; however, I do it anyway and I leave the hospital.

The dreamer had been having marital difficulties for some time, and the dream anticipated a sudden, final breakdown in the relationship that occurred a few weeks later. Nine months earlier, an awareness of the toll the relationship was taking dawned on the dreamer, although she was not ready at that time to take action. The dreamer's wife could be controlling and critical, and the dreamer often felt the need to comply. The dream shows the development of a psychological "child"—a newly embodied awareness and ability to act on her convictions.

Key: Explore images from the past in your dreams.

If your dream features images from the past, try applying the following questions:

- What was going on for you at the time pictured in the dream?
- Are there similar themes occurring in your life now?
- Are you behaving in a way that was appropriate to an earlier time?
- Is there unfinished business from that time in your life?
- If you dream of a new baby, what was going on in your life nine months ago?
- If a child appears in your dream, what was significant when you were that age? What happened that many years ago?

Journaling Prompt

Write about the time referenced in the dream. What were you like? What was your life like? How were you different then? How are you the same now?

Here and Now: Current Situation

Most dreams contain present-day imagery, take place in everyday settings, and feature people and places from our daily lives. Such dreams provide perspective and commentary on the current situation. A forty-eight-year-old woman at a difficult point in her marriage found herself drawn to a

colleague. She had not started an affair but was spending a lot of time with this person and was considering leaving her marriage. She had the following dream:

Driving in the Dark

I am driving at night across a long bridge over an extensive body of water. It is completely dark. For some reason, the car has no lights and there are no streetlights. I know how long this bridge is, and how it winds. I cannot see anything and I realize how dangerous this is. I can't go further, but I also can't turn back. I think it would be best for me to stop driving and wait until there is more light.

Without making any reference to the past, the dream succinctly and forcefully portrays the current condition: the dreamer is headed into peril and can't see ahead. At the outset, the dream ego is driving its agenda forward, then realizes the danger—she could drive off the winding bridge. The dream makes a very strong statement about the present life situation: *You are "in the dark" and driving blind! Stop!!*

The imagery in a here-and-now dream may be dramatic, as in the preceding dream—and it may also appear so ordinary that its import is easy to miss.

Huge IKEA

I am in a famous place far away, four or five times bigger than IKEA. There is one small section for shopping and all else is in darkness with sunlight on specific things. It's not clear what these things are. I can't find my way and there are no signs. I just have to keep going with no way to orient or strategize. I have to focus on what is there. It isn't about getting out but being in, and I stop worrying about it.

This dreamer was facing a challenging life situation she had not created and could not change. The dreamer is in a famous place, albeit far away and therefore foreign to consciousness. IKEA, however, was a place she (and everyone!) can get lost in. There is only one small section for shopping, an

ego-driven process, and sporadic rays of sun provide spots of clarity but no signs or direction. The usual means of ego orientation are absent. Then the dreamer realizes "it isn't about getting out but being in"—being present. She lets go of worrying, which is future-oriented. The dream maker is saying, *Just be here*.

Key: Take note of images of the present.

Most dreams are a snapshot of our current psychic reality.

- Does the dream seem to emphasize something about this moment right now? What is it wanting you to pay attention to?
- How is the situation in the dream like a current life situation?
- What is the dream maker's attitude toward the situation in the dream? What adjustments is the dream asking you to make?

The Future: What Lies Ahead?

In the ancient world, people believed dreams foretold the future. According to Jung, one of the main functions of dreams is to preview what lies ahead. He referred to this as the prospective function of dreams and considered this key to how dreams keep us on track as we unfold into the fullest version of ourselves. Jung recognized that the unconscious has purposive energy—our inner compass points to the true north of individuation. As Jung explains, dream imagery sometimes "outlines the solution of a conflict,"[4] predicts what is going to happen, and warns us when we are off track. Such predictions are not unlike a weather forecast: an anticipatory combination of probabilities related to known attitudes and behavior. It's as if the dream maker were saying, *Given the givens of this situation, here are likely possibilities*.

Dreams may make specific references to potential future outcomes, as in this dream from Jung's patient with symptoms of physical illness. His dream of visiting his childhood village quoted above was followed by this one:

> I am in a great hurry because I want to go on a journey. I keep on looking for things to pack, but can find nothing. Time flies, and the train will soon be leaving. Having finally succeeded in getting all my things together, I hurry along the street, only to discover that I have forgotten a briefcase containing important papers. I dash back all out of breath, find it at last, then race to the station, but I make hardly any headway. With a final effort I rush onto the platform only to see the train just steaming out of the station yard. It is very long, and it runs in a curious S-shaped curve, and it occurs to me that if the engine-driver does not look out, and puts on steam when he comes into the straight, the rear coaches will still be on the curve and will be thrown off the rails by the gathering speed. And this is just what happens: the engine-driver puts on steam, I try to cry out, the rear coaches give a frightful lurch and are thrown off the rails. There is a terrible catastrophe. I wake up in terror.[5]

Jung considered the dream a warning, but the dreamer did not heed it and subsequently suffered a personal catastrophe. Jung's patient was steaming ahead in life, mindless of what was behind him. Like the engine-driver, ego keeps us on track in our daily lives, but like cars on a train, many emotions, memories, and motivations trail behind consciousness. Jung realized that because the unconscious has access to subtle information, it can synthesize what is important, present it to us in dream images, and indicate a likely outcome.

Some dreams that deal with the future have a matter-of-fact feeling, as if the dream maker is casually commenting about something coming up. Lisa had such a dream the night before an important exam in analytic training. She had been through two days of oral examinations and had one more to pass before she would be eligible to enter the next stage, so the stakes were high. Fittingly, the final exam was on dreams. She had gone to bed the night before with a plan for the next day—when she would wake up, study, exercise, and eat—all in time to arrive at the exam ready and a little early. That night, she dreamed the following:

Shoe Sale

I go to a children's shoe sale at a discount store. Everything is a mess and there are hardly any shoes left. I have arrived too late.

By creating an image of disarray and lost opportunity, the dream maker indicated that something was amiss. At first, Lisa couldn't make any sense of this dream. Struck by its ending, she double-checked the exam schedule and realized she had misread it: the exam was earlier than she had thought. If not for this dream, Lisa might have missed the exam and failed. In comparing the exam to a discount shoe sale, the dream maker did not seem overly worried, but nevertheless provided a warning. The dream also seemed to say "lighten up"—the exam is no bigger deal than getting a good discount.

Although the prospective function is an essential characteristic of dreams, it is important not to assume that it infallibly guides life in the right direction. The dream maker does not have *superior* knowledge but *different* knowledge. Just as people underestimate the psychological significance of dreams, there is an equally great danger of overvaluing the unconscious perspective, as if it provides oracular wisdom that need not be questioned.[6] Our job in waking life is to engage and understand the psyche's perspective and make more conscious determinations and decisions.

> Dreams pave the way for life, and they determine you without you understanding their language.
>
> —C. G. Jung

Precognitive Dreams

Jung was clear that the prospective function of dreams was entirely ordinary. Dreams that seem to suggest future probabilities are not the same thing as precognitive dreams—those that mysteriously portray future events with striking accuracy. On the morning of October 21, 1966, thousands of tons of coal waste inundated the small mining town of Aberfan, South Wales, burying an elementary school and killing more than one hundred children. Psychiatrist John Barker reached Aberfan later that same day and recorded the story of ten-year-old Eryl Mai Jones, who had a dream the day before the tragedy: "I went to school and there was no school there.

Something black had come down all over it!"[7] Little Eryl died in the tragic accident. Jung once dreamed of a "gigantic wolfhound with a fearful, gaping maw," and knew that "the Wild Huntsman had commanded it to carry away a human soul." The next morning he awoke to news of his mother's death.[8]

Though many have experienced genuinely prophetic dreams, Jung cautioned against overemphasizing this capacity. Since precognition requires a later confirming event, prophetic significance at the time of the dream is uncertain and unlikely. "Also," Jung wrote, "such dreams are relatively rare. It is therefore not worth looking at the dreams for their future significance. One usually gets it wrong."[9]

Key: Keep in mind the prospective function of dreams.

Like a weather report, dreams can show future probabilities. If your dream seems to reference the future, apply the following questions:

- What does the dream say about what's likely to come next?
- How might this dream be a warning? How might it portend a positive development?
- What is the feeling tone of the dream's prospective function?
- Does the dream offer comfort or reassurance during a difficult time?

A Sweeping Life Overview

Dreams can also provide us with an overview of our situation, as if the dream maker is taking stock and distilling major life themes. Such dreams often take up an essential through line that embraces past, present, and future. A fifty-six-year-old man dreamed the following:

Crib Drifting Home

I am floating at the edge of the earth's atmosphere; there is a male presence there with me, though I never see who it is. I look far away, perhaps hundreds of light-years away, and see myself at one or two years

of age, sitting in a space capsule that also looks like a crib that is slowly traveling toward earth. I say to the presence beside me: “He is damaged, there’s something wrong with him, he is not fixable.” I feel very sad for the little boy, though the little boy himself seems placid. I know it will be a long, long time before he reaches earth.

The dream ego floats at the edge of earth’s atmosphere, tenuously connected to life and relationships. A crib-sized space capsule appears; we learn that the boy has been damaged and that he has been alone and adrift for a long time. This is a concise, poignant depiction of the dreamer’s current situation and past emotional exile due to early relational wounding. The dreamer had few close personal relationships. He had been a sensitive child who grew up in a harsh, chaotic household and had to hide his feelings—especially from himself. The dream also points to a future resolution: although it will take time, he is on his way to earthly feeling and connection. With its clear references to the dreamer’s past, present, and future, the dream elegantly narrates where the boy has come from, how he is now, and where he is going.

Key: Look for a wide-ranging review of key life issues.

Dreams that reference past, present, and future may offer an overview of our psychological situation.

- Does your dream reference the origin of your current situation, where you are now, and where you’re heading?
- What does the dream maker want you to know about where you have come from and where you are going?
- Does the dream illustrate overarching life themes?

Telos

In a surprising and important insight, Jung realized that the dream maker’s ability to look ahead evidenced a larger, purposive movement toward a goal. The idea that our psychological development is goal-oriented is

known as telos, a Greek word meaning "end." Jungian analyst James Hillman likened telos to the blueprint of an oak tree in every acorn. If environmental conditions are right, the acorn will grow according to its inherent pattern and fulfill its destiny to become an oak. Similarly, each of us comes into the world with an innate blueprint, a unique pattern that is ours to live out as we engage in the mission of individuation. Most of the time, we don't consciously know this pattern, but the center of the personality that Jung termed the Self understands and guides this unfolding process. This is why, when we look back at our lives, it often feels like a mysterious intelligence was at work, safeguarding our destiny. Maybe at a crucial junction we met a person who changed the course of our life or had an accident that forced us to change direction in a way that later felt meant to be. Just as every acorn wants to become an oak tree, something in us seeks the wholeness of individuation.

> Dreams often seem nonsense to us, but they spring from nature and are related to our future life.
>
> —C. G. Jung

Although telos is related to the prospective function of dreams, it tends to challenge us to open ourselves to new perspectives rather than convey an explicit outcome. According to Jungian analyst Patricia Berry, telos in dreams is that which is most different from ego consciousness.[10] Telos imagery is a surprising, even jolting element that points in an unexpected direction. Such images tend to shake us up, pull us up short, and turn the tables on conscious intention. Telos in dreams often points toward rising developments or attitudes. It carries a sense of futurity and the volitional, if mysterious, nature of the unconscious that is different from a prognosis or prediction. It is infused with energy that activates our curiosity—and often our defensiveness. To see how telos might help us penetrate a dream's meaning, let's consider this dream:

Kitchen Fish

I was in a kitchen. It looked a little like the one from my childhood home. I'm searching for a bowl or plate in the cupboards, opening them one at a

time. They are all empty, as if we have just moved in. Then I open another one and there is a bowl of rotting meat. The smell makes my eyes sting, and I recoil in disgust. There are maggots writhing in the rotting meat, but there is also a tiny, bejeweled fish just standing there, gasping and looking at me with its big, luminous eyes. It seems to be made of colorful enamel and gemstones, but at the same time, it is alive. I think to myself that I must get it in water right away.

When working with a dream, particularly one that is difficult to understand such as this one, try asking where telos is in the dream. What is the surprising or unexpected thing? Here, it is the fish. Telos is often that element of the dream that has the most energy, even if it's alarming or horrifying. Understanding telos is about looking in the new direction to which the dream maker is pointing: What message is the jewel-encrusted fish in the putrid meat trying to deliver? The dreamer, making a career and lifestyle change, is reverting to an attitude from the past (her childhood home) but finds something shockingly unexpected. Without knowing what the image means, noting telos sparks wonder and curiosity: perhaps something precious from the past, left to fester, has taken on startling new life. Telos, like curiosity, pulls us forward.

Telos in dreams doesn't necessarily come at the end. It is often the image that is the strangest, holds the most emotional charge, or captures our imagination. Consider the following dream of a sixty-two-year-old woman:

Strange Animals

I'm somewhere with other people. We look outside and see a pair of strange animals that are a cross between a goat and an ape. The male only uses his hind legs and his front legs hang limp. The female walks on all fours and is more goatlike. I'm looking at them through the window. I'm fascinated. The person I'm with assures me they're not dangerous. I want to make contact, to offer some food. More start to come. Families of them. Dozens. Some are wearing single articles of clothing—a hat or a ribbon. I see them streaming through the trees. I'm delighted and want to go outside. My husband expresses trepidation. Are they dangerous? Or a nuisance, like squirrels? We don't want to encourage them. But my

attitude wins. We all go outside to join them, and there is a festival atmosphere. Someone has a daughter who is getting married. There is a lot of delicious, opulent food for the wedding—beautiful carts piled high with colorful desserts. The father gives us permission to offer the food to the animals. I don't know that I ever quite succeed in making contact with the strange animals.

The element that signals telos by bringing something new and challenging to the dream ego is the strange animals. This dreamer's apparent comfort with the unconscious was evidenced by the dream ego's attitude: she wants to make contact. However, she is also ambivalent. Her defensiveness and wariness are represented by the inner husband who worries that the animals could be dangerous or a nuisance, like squirrels. The odd animals point to psychic potential. The dream maker affirms the dream ego's attitude of delight and willingness to *go outside* (the usual boundaries) and meet these wonderful creatures: there is a festival atmosphere, a union, and a quantity of beautiful food. Keep doing this, the dream maker is saying, and you will be richly rewarded.

Asking yourself where telos might be in a dream can shift our focus, open curiosity, and allow us to consider new ways of looking at otherwise startling or negative images. Telos reorients us by reminding us that the dream maker has a purpose and is trying to lead us forward. We don't know what the strange animals "mean," but we recognize an element of surprise that is "other" than the dream or waking ego.

Key: Especially if you're stuck, ask yourself where telos is in the dream.

The unexpected and new may carry the main message of the dream.

- Where is the surprising, stop-time image in the dream?
- How does your dream ego respond to the new thing? Is there evidence of defensiveness?
- Can you be open to the perplexing newness of the telos element?

• Where might the new thing be pointing in your life right now?

In dreams, past, present, and future coexist and overlap. The dream maker freely traverses the normal boundaries of time, combining elements of different eras in unique and fanciful ways. These juxtapositions help us link current challenges to the past and point to future possibilities. “The unconscious has no time,” according to Jung. “There is no trouble about time in the unconscious. Part of our psyche is not in time and not in space. They are only an illusion, time and space, and so in a certain part of our psyche time does not exist at all.”[11] With its intimations of an existence outside of time, the unconscious bridges our everyday world and the world of the eternal and helps us chart a course toward wholeness.

8

Shadow

The Inner Exile

The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness.

—C. G. Jung

In 1886—when Carl Jung was eleven years old—Robert Louis Stevenson awoke from a dream with an idea for a story that explored the relationship between good and evil, and the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was born. Now part of the cultural lexicon, the tale colorfully depicts the dynamic that Jung would later call "shadow"—the universal inclination to distance oneself from personality traits deemed unacceptable. The cultured and aristocratic Dr. Jekyll exemplifies persona, the face aligned with conventional expectations and social mores that we present to the world. Everything that must be denied to present this proper face gets disowned and can only be expressed by Mr. Hyde—the shadow part of the personality. Mr. Hyde can do and be the things that would never be acceptable for Dr. Jekyll. The two act together, allowing the single person to live out his role in polite society and get his baser appetites met.

Jekyll-and-Hyde dynamics fascinate us and populate headlines. Martha Stewart, maven of domesticity, was convicted of securities fraud and obstruction of justice. Beloved comedian Bill Cosby, dubbed "America's dad," was exposed as a sexual predator. The attorney general of New York, Eliot Spitzer, crusaded to curb corruption on Wall Street—and patronized prostitutes. Elizabeth Holmes captivated investors with a supposed breakthrough method for testing blood before she was convicted of fraud and conspiracy.

Personal Shadow

These celebrity Jekylls and Hydes represent extreme versions of the inner struggles most of us contend with. Each of us has a shadow that forms during development and consists of qualities and characteristics that were unacceptable to our families and culture. We were told not to talk back, be messy, or hit our pesky little sister. If we learned not to question parental or religious authority, assertiveness may be consigned to shadow. If our family of origin valued self-sufficiency, needing help may be in shadow. In addition, ignoble instincts harmful to social cohesion such as theft, deceit, and violence must be relegated to the shadow. Shadow is the price we pay for being seen—and seeing ourselves—in a favorable light.

What has been locked out remains untamed. Like feral dogs and cats, shadow becomes fiercer in the wilderness of the unconscious—and it wants to come inside the well-lit, orderly house of consciousness. "By not being aware of having a shadow, you declare a part of your personality to be non-existent," wrote Jung. "Then it enters the kingdom of the non-existent, which swells up and takes on enormous proportions. When you don't acknowledge that you have such qualities, you are simply feeding the devils."[1] Trying to disown shadow doesn't work—it simply goes underground and acts on us in embarrassing, regrettable, or distressing ways. The respected psychologist doesn't report her cash payments to the IRS and tucks them away to pay for family vacations. The business executive who prides himself on his honesty and humility makes conspicuous contributions to charity that he knows his colleagues will see. A woman who consciously values friendship can't resist saying something catty about a close friend. Luckily our shadow qualities seek integration and speak to us from their place of exile at night in our dreams.

Though the shadow includes many genuinely negative qualities, it is not an enemy to be vanquished but a psychic reality whose power we diminish only by recognizing it consciously. "Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is,"[2] noted Jung. Becoming conscious of our darkness makes it less likely that we will express it unconsciously. The centrality of confrontation with shadow to psychological growth cannot be overestimated. Because dreams allow shadowy parts to speak, dreamwork provides an opportunity to meet aspects of ourselves that we may never have known, have forgotten, or

repressed. Confrontation with shadow is the path to gaining the treasure of individuality, and it is a crucial component of individuation. Jung believed that only individual shadow work ultimately had the power to change our strife-ridden world. Imagine: you, together with myriad unknown others around the world, are spinning threads of redemption by working with your dreams and engaging shadow.

Shadow in Dreams

At night, the dream maker shows us a shadowy truth we would rather avoid. Shadow is often a shame- and fear-ridden aspect of ourselves that, during waking hours, we can minimize, intellectualize, or attribute to that annoying neighbor, colleague, or in-law. But at night, the dream maker brings us images of what has been cut off from consciousness. Working with shadow images in dreams allows us to harness parts of ourselves that appear undesirable but contain valuable energy for life.

Jung theorized that shadow in dreams often appears as a person the same sex as the dreamer, but shadow can show up in other ways as well. The dream maker may hold up a mirror, displaying our tendency to act in a shadowy way. Alternatively, dreams may reflect shameful aspects of ourselves, showing us where we are identified with or overwhelmed by our shadowy side. As always, the dream maker tells us the truth we would rather not acknowledge.

Shadow Projected and Personified

We all have ways that we distance ourselves from our shadow, and the strategies we use are often reflected in dreams. One such strategy is to project our rejected, shadowy qualities onto friends, colleagues, acquaintances, or online strangers: we see our own disliked qualities in others and then we disparage or attack them. We believe (with some degree of self-satisfaction) that we've transcended shadow when we have instead engaged in scapegoating. A good indication of projection is a heated reaction that is out of proportion to the actual situation, such as red-in-the-face denunciations of others' political beliefs or values. Outsized contempt and condemnation are signals that the other has qualities we deny in ourselves. If you are self-righteously furious at your colleague who cuts

corners at work, what about your inattentiveness at meetings or that loose bathroom tile you've been putting off fixing? When something is offensive and "wrong" outside, it likely has a corollary inside.

Understanding the relationship between your dream ego and a shadow figure often begins by acknowledging the qualities you find particularly obnoxious or unappealing. Consider the following dream of a mother of two adult children:

Ragged Woman

I'm on a cruise ship with David. A beautiful, blond-haired baby falls into my arms from where he was perched on a pipe above us. I tend to him lovingly, and he smiles and coos. We are enjoying him and want to take care of him. Then his mother shows up. She is ragged and unkempt. Maybe she is drunk. It is clear she is in no condition to take care of a baby, and I ask if we can keep him. She says no and takes him from my arms.

The dreamer was troubled and disgusted by the ragged woman and sad that she took the baby away. Raised in difficult circumstances, the dreamer had learned to be stoic in the face of hardship and accommodating in social situations. Her ragged shadow had long been split off and now appeared in her dream. Though the unkempt woman is reviled by the dream ego, she is the mother of the beautiful baby—and therefore the source of new life in the psyche. Integrating the feral, fiery energy of the ragged woman is the invitation from the dream maker. It's as if the dream maker is saying, *You've become bigger than your raggedness and can let it into consciousness*.

> One cannot afford to be naïve in dealing with dreams. They originate in a spirit that is not quite human, but is rather the breath of nature—of the beautiful and generous as well as the cruel goddess.
>
> —C. G. Jung

A twenty-eight-year-old woman who works in community mental health was facing relationship difficulties at the time she had this dream:

The Hidden Girl

My partner had told me about the secret passages in the house and how he stumbled down one, how frightening it was. The corridor was stuffed with a wedding dress, and there was a girl or creature kept locked up down there. I found myself stumbling down that corridor. I think it stank or was stuffy down there. I got tangled in the wedding-dress tulle as I pushed forward, then realized what had happened and what my partner had said. I saw the girl, who tried to follow me. I panicked and ran back up and put all the blockages back up. She had followed me and was looking through the cracks of the things I piled up. I told my dad about it and said she was too stupid to find her way out if the obstacles were put back there blocking the narrow tunnel. He had keys to lock it up. I panicked because the owner of the house was coming back, and I thought they would know we had discovered they were hiding/keeping this prisoner. We waited, and I let my dad speak with the owner of the house. The owner said they needed to check with the girl to see what was going on. I was surprised by this because I thought the girl was a secret. There was a logbook where I had to log my time spent in the house as time spent actually caring for this girl.

The dreamer's parents divorced when she was a child, and she feels trepidation about making a relationship commitment. Some aspect of herself has been hidden away in a foul-smelling corridor—along with entangling wedding dress tulle. The dream ego feels frightened by the exiled, shadowy content, deems her "stupid" and attempts to block her from consciousness. The shadow girl, however, wants contact with the dream ego. Surprisingly, the dream ego learns that it is her job to care for this girl. The shadow girl seems associated with wounds the dreamer experienced during her parents' divorce, her subsequent relationship issues, and her fear of commitment. That everyone knows about the girl indicates shadow content close to consciousness.

The dream maker may feature someone from your personal life onto whom you regularly project shadow, as is the case for the following dream of a thirty-one-year-old woman who works for a graphic design firm:

Fired!

Someone who reminds me of Rachel was fired. We all feel bad for her and are trying to comfort her, but maybe I had a feeling that Rachel got what was coming to her.

The dreamer identified Rachel as an irritating colleague. "Rachel is aggressive in an awkward way. It's like she doesn't even think about it. She just pushes into whatever she wants." When shadow appears in the form of a disliked person, it is daunting to discover those hated characteristics in yourself. The dreamer recognized that she represses her own assertiveness and aggression, which can then erupt clumsily. The dream ego wants to fire her inner Rachel, but the dream maker presents her with an invitation to own and know her Rachel assertiveness.

Key: Aspects of yourself that you might not feel comfortable acknowledging can show up as a same-sex figure.

- Does a same-sex figure appear in your dream? Consider that this person might represent shadow qualities that you have tried to repress or deny.
- What does the dream say about those qualities? Do they meet with success?
- Is there a person in your dream from your waking life whom you don't like or find irritating? How have you disowned or disallowed the qualities that most irritate you in that person? What qualities might you need to claim and integrate?
- What does the dream tell you about your tendency to push away or deny these parts of yourself?

- Where or how are you encountering this shadow element in your current life?

Friends and Family

Shadow figures aren't personified only by people we don't like. Friends and siblings often carry shadow for us, and the dream maker recruits their images to show us these dynamics in dreams. Jung's colleague Marie-Louise von Franz discusses the reason why friends often personify our disowned traits:

> We make friends with people who live out our shadow. Friends can do the things we cannot do. Tell me who your friends are, and I have the whole panorama of your good and bad qualities. Our bad qualities as well as our good ones hold an attraction, a fascination for us. The friend is often the person whom one envies. The friend is more elegant, or dances better, or can move about better in life, or has depth, or has a better mind. So if one hasn't worked on one's shadow, there is always a kind of love-hate relationship with the shadow and with one's friends.[3]

If a same-sex sibling or friend shows up in a dream, ask yourself what you admire, envy, or find irritating about that person. Have you disallowed that quality in your life? Can you have a more conscious relationship with this trait? Examine the attitude of the dream ego—it is often off-base or needs to be reconsidered.

It requires humility to accept that the shadow figures in our dreams possess our disowned qualities—including desired but denied attributes we find in our family and friends. As cartoon character Pogo said, "We have met the enemy and he is us." This inherent ambivalence is evident in the following dream of a twenty-six-year-old man who works as a package handler:

Killing the Rat

I was in a classroom and I saw my friend sitting with a white rat and a snake in his hands. The rat and the snake were trying to eat each other, but eventually the rat killed the snake. When the rat defeated the snake, my friend promptly snapped the rat's neck. I was horrified and felt great anger toward my friend. He looked deeply sorry, but in my anger I demanded he fight me. He agreed, and I looked around and saw another person just laughing at my anger, as if it were an overreaction. Before the fight, everything went black and a feeling of empathy and possible forgiveness washed over me.

The dreamer had recently ended a long-term relationship because "there was a feeling that something was wrong," but he found the ending painful and was sometimes second-guessing his decision. The dreamer saw the friend as someone able to do hard things that needed to be done. The friend represents the shadow—that part of him that can harness darker qualities such as aggression in service to his instincts about what is right for him. That the dreamer is ready to confront his shadow side shows a readiness to value and integrate these qualities. It isn't surprising, therefore, that the dream ends on a note of redemption. How we respond to the friend in the dream is a detailed depiction of how we relate to our shadow side. In the dream above, the dreamer is horrified but willing to engage.

Often, friends in dreams who carry shadow are objects of envy. As von Franz noted, they live out something we may not yet have been able to claim for ourselves. Consider the following dream of a twenty-nine-year-old woman working in a health-related field:

Running from Sally

Sally and I are playing in a pool. It's like we're little kids. I splash her with water, and then she starts to pursue me. We're laughing, but I become very intent on getting away from her. Now we're out of the pool, in a crowded scene, and I'm running away from her. I can see her but she can't see me. She looks bewildered and shocked that I have slipped away. Then I am at her wedding. We are both in a large room. There are tables with tablecloths and large arrangements of pink flowers on every table. I have a piece of cake and it is delicious. Later, I try to sneak back into the

room after everyone has left for another piece of cake, but the staff have cleared it. I try to go back to the kitchen for some cake. Then I'm on a staircase above the main room, partially hidden by a heavy red drape. Sally is down below, still looking surprised that she hasn't found me. I know she can't see me. I decide to go all the way up to the top floor so she won't be able to find me. I want to escape entirely without so much as a close call.

The dreamer was jealous of Sally, a recently married friend. Although the dreamer consciously desired marriage, she was unconsciously ambivalent. Her mother had been unhappy and frustrated as a wife and had frequently told her daughter never to marry. The dream ego begins in a childlike state, splashing Sally—only in fun?—and then evading her. She enjoys the delicious wedding cake, but her desire for it is a little secretive—she tries to sneak more. She is running and hiding from Sally, the shadow aspect of herself that pursues connection.

Much of what von Franz says about friends is also true of siblings and children. Both friends and siblings often carry shadow, but we don't choose our siblings, and family dynamics have longevity and intensity. We are therefore likely to have more complex relationships with siblings than with friends. Families often unconsciously assign roles to different children, especially same-sex siblings: this daughter is social, that one is serious. The older boy is athletic, the younger is the funny one. Such roles can shape how we see ourselves, helping to dictate which qualities we are allowed to claim as our own and which we are expected to reject. Sisters and brothers often populate our dreams, reflecting aspects of ourselves requiring further integration.

The following dream comes from a forty-eight-year-old-woman who was unhappily married and between careers:

Driven by My Sister

I'm in the car with my sister at night. She is driving a convertible sports car with the top down. It's thrilling, but I'm uncomfortable. She is driving too fast. It's typical of her, I think. She always drives too fast.

In her day world, the dreamer looked down on her sister for being career-oriented. The dreamer had worked in various fields but always found the work unsatisfying and didn't know what to do with her life. She was split off from her ambition, which she projected onto her sister. In waking life, her denied longing for achievement was expressed in her tendency to have affairs with wealthy, successful men. The dream maker portrays her as a passenger at night—in the dark of the unconscious—where her sister's driving is thrilling but uncomfortable. The dream alerts her that her ambition has been relegated to the unconscious, where it is *driving* her in a way that could be dangerous and destructive.

Key: Friends and siblings often represent disowned qualities in ourselves.

If your dream features a same-sex friend or sibling, consider how this person might hold shadow for you.

- What about this person activates feeling in you? Is it an attitude or value you have disallowed?
- Are you jealous of this person in waking life? Of what are you jealous? This could indicate an unlived potential that you haven't owned in yourself yet.
- What underdeveloped aspect of yourself does this person represent in the dream?
- What themes in your current life does this friend or family member symbolize?

The Light in the Shadow

Many times, what has been disallowed and cast into the shadow are positive potentials that contain vitality. Jung once remarked that the shadow is "90 percent pure gold."[4] Shadow has energy and possibility, so reclaiming it promotes growth and renewal.

It's often a shadow figure that points the way to a new attitude or solution, for the unconscious has a radically different perspective from

reason. Though shadow figures may appear threatening, they ultimately wish to befriend us. If we disavow the mud, we forfeit the lotus.

We've already seen this in the dreams above—the shadow figures we encountered represented unclaimed, constructive capacities in the dreamer. Let's consider a few more dreams in which this psychic reality is pronounced. When Lisa was twenty-eight and in a depression, she had the following dream:

Diving

I am swimming in the ocean, and I am a little afraid. I'm not out very deep but there is a terrible undertow. There are other people with me. One is a beautiful young woman who is a very accomplished swimmer. She is helping me not be afraid. She teaches me how not to panic but to go steady and sure and have faith that the ground is not far below. I am standing in the water watching a huge wave that towers over our heads coming toward us. I am afraid but know that if I duck under the wave, everything will be okay. If I don't duck, I could get swept under. I'm standing waiting for the wave, ready to duck when the dream ends.

Lisa had this dream shortly after she began to read Jung, an undertaking unaligned with her plan to go to law school. Never having been confident in the water, Lisa was amazed to find an accomplished inner swimmer adept at navigating huge waves. An inner potential for standing her ground while engaging the power of the sea, long a symbol of the unconscious, was now present. Lisa had a shadow ally in the beautiful, accomplished woman swimmer who understood how to face the waves.

A thirty-two-year-old woman struggling with anger and aggression had a dream that shows the development of her relationship with her shadow:

Serpent Woman

There is a woman who is also a snake. She was born with snake fangs and venom glands, and her bite is as poisonous as a copperhead or other deadly snake. I am very afraid of her, and am therefore rude and pugnacious. Then she is a real snake, and I am holding her in my hand. I

have my knuckles clamped right behind her jaws to keep her from biting me, but she is writhing, and I am losing my grip. I know that if she bites me, I will need antivenom; if I don't get it, I will die. I throw her through a doorway into a room where there are other people, hurling insults at her. I manage to shut the door. The snake seems bewildered, but I know that I have enraged her and that she will be likely to strike at the other people in the room where she is locked up. Then the serpent is a woman again. She says one nice thing to me, and suddenly I see my error. She has the ability to kill me but by no means the desire. I had assumed the worst about her, but I was wrong. Right away, I go up to her and say, "I'm sorry I was such a bitch. I was scared of you and that's why I acted the way I did. I was wrong." And from that moment on, we are terrific friends. I really like her and value our friendship, and I am protective of her. I think how great it is that if I am ever in danger, she could kill an attacker just by biting them. I am still sometimes a bit in awe or frightened of her, although she never gives me any reason to fear.

The dreamer's capacity for aggression had been denied and is pictured in the dream by the shadowy snake woman. When the dreamer directs her split-off aggression toward herself (acts pugnaciously toward the snake woman), then the shadow becomes a writhing snake that is difficult for the dream ego to control. However, the dream ego is eventually able to see the value of the snake woman. They become friends, and the snake woman—her aggression—is now a resource the dreamer can draw on.

This dream is from a white male graduate student:

Sparring

I find myself in a conflict with a TA or junior professor in the program. He's Black, has dreadlocks, and is built like an Adonis: big, muscled, with low body-fat. We spar verbally. I tell him that the field trip is bullshit, and he replies that I'm bullshit. We go back and forth about the master's program and some of the content. Our verbal sparring escalates until we're slap-boxing. At one point I hit his abdomen, a thick wall of muscle. This guy is bigger than me, is in unbelievable physical shape, yet he's still backing up when I attack. I don't understand why he's not

dominating me. We keep it up. Neither of us is really trying to hurt each other, but we are competing.

The dream ego challenges the Black "Adonis," the dreamer's ethnic and physical opposite, first verbally, then physically. He represents a positive quality that had been in the shadow for this dreamer— strength without the need to dominate. The feeling tone of the dream shifts from antagonism to respectful competition. This dream reaches into the mythic realm, echoing a tale from ancient Sumeria in which the gods create a primitive man, Enkidu, to stop King Gilgamesh from oppressing his people. They fight, Enkidu finally concedes, and they become friends. Enkidu's challenge modified the king's egotism and harnessed it to purpose and service. This dream, like the myth, initiates the dream ego into greater masculine self-esteem through an encounter with a shadow figure.

Key: Look for the positive potentials in shadow.

Shadow is full of potentials that, if conscious, can be used for positive purpose.

- How are the shadow figures in your dream showing you traits, attitudes, and capacities that you might consciously relate to and develop?
- How is your dream ego resisting or fighting against this trait?
- How is the shadow figure in your dream a possible guide or ally?
- What part of you is your dream maker inviting you to consider?

Journaling Prompt

Even when a shadow figure seems dark, disgusting, or dangerous, what can you learn from it? Explore the shadow figure in your dream to discover what hidden potentials it points to.

Archetypal Shadow

According to Jung, the shadow is an archetype, a psychic universal. If we recognize elements of personal shadow consciously, we can forge a relationship with it, reducing the likelihood that we will act it out unconsciously. While personal shadow is close to consciousness, appearing in dreams as familiar people who represent a piece of our own psychological and emotional life, archetypal shadow is infused with the impersonal mythic power of monsters, sorcerers, and witches. Such images arise from the collective unconscious that undergirds all human experience and can appear in dreams as images of evil that attack the life principle. *Archetypal shadow shows up in dreams as anything that is against life itself.*

Not surprisingly, personal and collective shadow overlap. The leather-clad dream dude in a dark parking lot calls up images of underworld gods. According to Jung, "The contents of the personal unconscious (i.e., the shadow) are indistinguishably merged with the archetypal contents of the collective unconscious and drag the latter with them when the shadow is brought into consciousness."[5] The taproot of personal shadow often reaches down to shared human mythic shadow. Our propensity to cut ourselves off from life can tap into the archetypal domain and show up as terrifying dream images.

Jung once worked with an adolescent with a severe "compulsion neurosis"—what today we would call "obsessive-compulsive disorder." The young man's dilemma as related by Jung is depicted in the following dream:

> He is walking along an unfamiliar street. It is dark, and he hears steps coming behind him. With a feeling of fear he quickens his pace. The footsteps come nearer, and his fear increases. He begins to run. But the footsteps seem to be overtaking him. Finally he turns round, and there he sees the devil. In deathly terror he leaps into the air and hangs there suspended.[6]

Ironically, the evil depicted in the dream is *not* the devil but rather the dreamer's overly scrupulous, life-denying insistence on avoiding the devil. Jung noted that the dreamer sought to

keep himself in a "provisional" or "uncontaminated" state of purity. For this purpose he either severed or made "invalid" all contact with the world and with everything that reminded him of the transitoriness of human existence, by means of lunatic formalities, scrupulous cleansing ceremonies, and the anxious observance of innumerable rules and regulations of an unbelievable complexity. Even before the patient had any suspicion of the hellish existence that lay before him, the dream showed him that if he wanted to come down to earth again there would have to be a pact with evil.[7]

A man in his early thirties had worked hard to earn several advanced degrees, but something within blocked him from launching a career. He had the following dream:

The Gaping Mouth

I walk up to a familiar church. I notice how quiet everything is—no sounds of birds or cars. A terrible, ominous feeling comes over me as I walk up the front stairs and peer through the glass pane. Above the altar, I see an enormous gaping mouth, and I realize no matter how much I feed it, it will never be satisfied.

The dreamer was frightened and confused by the dream but understood that his compulsive drive to achieve degree after degree was not connected to his personal goals but rather to a misplaced obedience to a life-denying pursuit of achievement. The archetypal force of shadow had become the gaping maw of an insatiable god that supplanted a healthy relationship with the transpersonal. Like the Greek god Cronus, who ate each of his children at birth, the dreamer did not allow the intellectual "children" he birthed with each degree to live in the world.

Key: Look for life-denying images in dreams.

Archetypal shadow shows up in dreams as any attack on the life force itself. Such dreams can be terrifying and nightmarish. When you have such a dream, apply the following questions:

- How might the dream depict an inner energy attacking your life force?
- Where is this anti-life energy at work in your life?
- Does the dream suggest a way to address this force?

Dream as Mirror: Seeing Our Shadow

Sometimes the dream maker holds up a mirror, showing us how we behave in shadowy ways we may not have recognized. Most of us find it difficult to face how selfish, grasping, self-absorbed, and arrogant we can be—not to mention unaware, uncaring, and underhanded. Since we tend to conceal these parts from ourselves, they often show up in dreams in which our dream ego behaves badly. Remember that the dream maker is on your side, an honest companion who has the courage to confront you about your harmful attitudes and actions.

A woman who worked as a therapist had the following dream:

Lying to My Client

I am having a phone session with a female client. While I speak with her, I am lying in bed and masturbating. We get cut off and I do not try and reconnect or call her back. Later I realize that she will be angry with me for not trying to reconnect, so I write her an email and lie, telling her I tried to reach her.

The dreamer did not like this client, but because she had a hard time admitting it, her dislike asserted itself in unconscious ways. Her therapeutic boundaries had become lax and she was sliding into questionable behavior. By exaggerating her deceit (masturbating, failing to call, and lying), the dream maker confronted the dreamer with her shadow. The dream maker insisted on honesty, using dramatic dream behavior to represent denied waking-life feelings. Admitting her shadow of antipathy into consciousness was followed by relief and the realization that her feelings carried wisdom that could be put to good use.

A sixty-four-year-old woman who had substance-abuse issues dreamed:

Clogged Pipe

I am with another woman, a ne'er do well. We are younger. She is getting high. She shares it with me, but I can never get a good hit. The pipe is full of ashes or clogged up. Her parents are in the next room, and I'm amazed that she doesn't seem worried. Then we're in bed next to each other. I'm feeling hung over. I still can't get a good hit, and I think, *What a waste of a day! Why don't her parents come in and say something?* I don't want to be here. I don't want to be like her, getting high all the time.

The dream ego is at first identified with a younger attitude and behavior, then finds it unsatisfying and a waste of a day. There is a shadow figure in the dream—the young woman—but the dream ego is also behaving in a shadowy way, wasting the day getting high. However, the pipe is clogged and she can't get a good hit—the pleasure of this activity has diminished with greater consciousness of the negative consequences. The realization at the end—"I don't want to be like her, getting high all the time"—indicates differentiation from shadow and dawning consciousness about the impact of her cannabis use. This dream confronts the dreamer with the seriousness of using marijuana. She subsequently stopped.

> Dreams "leak out," they are not under control; no matter how innocent and simple a person is, there are dreams from which to get something if one can only catch any little tail that may be sticking out.
>
> —C. G. Jung

Here is another dream in which the dream maker holds up a mirror to show the dreamer her shadow:

Sandwich Station

I am in a supermarket where there is a station for ordering roll-up sandwiches. The young woman there seems to be all on her own and I

can see she is backed up. I insist on helping her. She says no, but I go around to where the ingredients are and start to make my own roll-up. I see that peeling up the thin layers of cheese and cold-cuts is hard—a skill that takes practice. I am clumsy and my roll-up is lumpy. I also see that I haven't helped because I'm slow, and the young woman is angry at me.

The dreamer's family of origin had been unstable; the dreamer assumed a caretaker role and later became a teacher. The dream ego's supposedly good intentions made a mess of the task; she was disrespectful of the worker, to whom she had a condescending attitude masked as kindness. The dreamer was able to consider that her impulse to help could be unkind, unnecessary, and unskilled—which opened up a new ability to consider prioritizing her creative energy.

These dreams illustrate that although facing shadow is discomfiting, it is in service to greater self-awareness and growth. Under the muck of myriad self-deceits, from drug addiction to compulsive helping, lies the gold of becoming more conscious, authentic, and alive. This is why shadow work matters.

Key: Consider whether your dream maker is pointing out how you behave in a shadowy way.

- Does your dream ego act in a way that is unappealing, off-putting, or uncharacteristic?
- How have you been behaving similarly in waking life without being conscious of doing so?
- How might your dream maker be holding up a mirror? What shadowy part of yourself is the dream maker showing you?

Primal Shadow

Shadow dynamics often show up in dream images that evoke revulsion. We may feel deeply ashamed of those parts of ourselves deemed unacceptable. Dreams bringing up these hidden aspects may be full of shame and disgust

and feature toilet-related images or infestation by bugs or rodents. Such dreams call for acceptance and integration of the disowned parts of us.

Bathroom Dreams

Bathrooms, urination, and defecation are common, anxiety-ridden themes in dreams. Stalls without doors, stopped-up toilets, and bathrooms that are hard to find abound. Urine and feces are body products outside ego's control, and the dream ego is usually distressed about public expression of an instinctual need. Aspects of shadow are concentrated in and represented by the body, and lavatory dreams depict psychological piss and shit that threaten to burst the bounds of ego and shame us.

Urination and defecation often symbolize urgent, angry self-expression: to be pissed off or call something a load of crap is to express anger topped with contemptuous dismissal. Jung says, "When something is produced from the unconscious, the first thing to come up is the infantile material that has long been lost to memory . . . the lowest value allies itself to the highest."[1] The connection between malodorous matter and desire for untainted transcendence is evident in today's gleaming bathrooms: toilet seats sanctify base functions and whirlpool tubs provide purification.

Many a child considers his excrement a creation, and many an adult sits on "the throne" to dream, read, and venerate physical fundament as an expression of an archetypal reality. What we do in bathrooms reflects psychological imperatives, so if you—like most of us—have a bathroom dream, consider shadow: the pleasure of physical expression, secluded personal space, and the opportunity to relieve oneself of stinky features and flush them away unseen.

Consider the following dream from a forty-five-year-old high school teacher and aspiring novelist:

A Bathroom Scene

I'm in a café in Florence. I've taken my laptop there and am sitting at a table drinking coffee and writing. I feel like the writing is going well and am excited and feeling good about myself. Then I have to use the toilet. It is one of those European toilets where there is just a hole in the floor. I make an incredibly big poop that lands on the floor. I have to figure out how to push the poop into the hole. It feels like there is more and more poop, and I am worried I won't be able to make it all go into the hole. What if I stop it up? Finally I think I manage to get it all down the hole. I use air freshener to try to disguise the smell, wash my hands, and leave the bathroom, but when I open the door, I am struck by how tiny the café is. Everyone in the café is looking at me, and they are all aware of the smell of my poop. I am mortified.

The dreamer had been to Florence in college, and associated it with culture, art, and sophistication. At midlife, she had begun to explore her potential as a writer and was feeling positive and hopeful about it. As she worked with the dream, however, she realized she also felt a deep sense of inadequacy: What if she wasn't talented enough to write? Then she would stink and everyone would smell it. The dream urged her to acknowledge her "shitty" aspects so they wouldn't undermine her aspirations.

The following dream also illustrates how repulsive images of personal shadow challenge our defenses in the service of greater consciousness. The dreamer is a twenty-five-year-old American graduate student who was adopted from China as a toddler.

Shooting the Worms

I was driving to school for class and trying to find my way through a neighborhood that looked like a Chinatown. At some point I walked through an alley that had a light grayish and green ambiance, like a cloudy day with gross moss. I opened one of those square metal doors that lead to the basement of a store from the sidewalk (the kind you take care not to walk on lest you fall through). Suddenly many large, white disgusting worms popped up from it, rooted from below, wriggling wildly around. I thought of how the filth and uncleaned grounds created such a gross, green, poop-filled environment in which these worms could

grow. For some reason the thought occurred to me that the only way to get rid of the worms would be to shoot each of them in the head and then do a deep clean of the floor to really clean out all the gunk and commit to never letting it get like that again.

The dreamer had recently found herself lashing out verbally at her fiancé. Her anger was further fueled by her fiancé's tendency to withdraw. She wondered whether the dream referenced the painful attachment wounds related to her adoption. "Perhaps," she said, "Chinatown alludes to the rot in my heart from this earlier time," for although her American family was loving, she had experienced early traumatic separation from her family of origin. The dreamer had a Chinatown basement of primal feelings—the vile worms of a putrefying past. She experienced her need for love as shameful and vile and relegated vulnerability to the shadow. Attachment to her fiancé activated her shadowy dependency needs, and his backing away echoed her abandonment by her birth parents: perhaps she had not been good enough to keep.

Key: Become curious about dream images that may reveal primal shadow.

- Does a dream contain images of putrefaction, defecation, or other content that inspires disgust, fear, or shame? Such content may be shadow asking for understanding and acceptance.
- What is the dream maker letting you know about how you treat that part of yourself?
- Does the dream offer any guidance on befriending that part of yourself?

Shadow work is difficult and uncomfortable. It requires looking at those parts of ourselves that are distressing, which is why they were assigned to shadow in the first place. Attempting to repress shadow takes energy, which, as with Jung's obsessive patient, can take on devilish proportions.

Shadow is a psychic fact; our only empowering choice is admitting it into consciousness.

Confronting shadow is important psychological work and the key to personal growth. Instead of projecting our darkness on others, we take responsibility for it. Dreamwork is one of the most potent and effective ways of encountering our shadow. Learning about our shadow through dreams can heal us and has a ripple effect on the world around us. According to Jung, the individual that has done this work "has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day."[8]

9

Anima and Animus

Our Unrealized Possibilities

Human nature was originally one, and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is what we call love.

—Aristophanes's speech in Plato's Symposium

In the dark time of life that followed his painful break with Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung spent time exploring his unconscious by communing imaginally with inner figures, a practice he named active imagination. He was stunned to discover a fascinating inner woman who had an independent identity and conversed freely with him. He named this part of himself "the anima"—the Latin word for *soul*—and theorized that we all contain an inner, contrasexual other.

The anima—the animus in a woman—is a supremely important component of the inner world. We are born with a blueprint for our unique developmental destiny of individuation. The dream maker is aware of our unlived potentials and creates an image of them as a compelling inner figure, usually of the opposite sex. As Jungian analyst Murray Stein explains, "Whatever is left out of the conscious adaptation . . . is relegated to the unconscious and will collect around the structure that Jung named anima/us."[1] Your anima/animus is the personification of your unrealized possibilities. The intense aching to merge with it is the grandest of romances.

Opposite-sex figures show up in dreams in the guise of lovers, celebrities, guides, and villains. Our interactions with them may include vivid sexual pleasures, sublime romantic attachments, or frightening encounters characterized by victimhood and persecution. The captivating other within is the link to the inner world of possibility. Its appearance evokes love and suffering in myriad permutations because love invites you

to tolerate growth, and suffering results from changing to accommodate it. Individuation makes demands on us.

When working with your dreams, remember that *shadow repels, anima/animus compels*. Shadow makes us squirm, so we usually reject it; as Jung said, it's all we don't want to be. Anima/animus, however, casts spells of enthrallment because it is charged with the energy of the collective unconscious. As archetypal components of the psyche, anima and animus generate innumerable images resonant with personal attraction and mythical power, which can be either captivating and creative or consuming and corrosive. We can sense them in the allure of movie stars and pop idols. Anima/animus has a mysterious, fascinating pull that we experience when we fall in love—and in our dreams at night.

Opposites as Images of Difference

Shadow work is our first call to integrate characteristics, values, and feelings we have repudiated as the price of adapting to the external world. The threshold to the internal world, anima and animus, then becomes accessible. According to Jung, consciousness develops because of the tension of opposites, which is creative. Just as weather is generated by polarities of hot and cold, psychic energy is produced by inner tensions—including the tension between what is in awareness and what has yet to be integrated. What remains undeveloped in us is an image of the soul—the inner opposite of our conscious standpoint.

The unconscious is ancient, and the dream maker uses foundational metaphors to reflect our current state of psychological development and move inner energy. Opposites such as male and female are primordial, universal categories that are deeply embedded in our evolutionary history—they first appeared 1.2 billion years ago. They are rooted in the primal, biological imperative of procreation and are archetypal. While our modern sensibilities may feel uncomfortable with these categories, the psyche often uses them to move inner energy in a direction opposite to our ego's limited perspective.

Whether you are a man or woman, whether you are gay, lesbian, or bisexual, you have within you images of an inner opposite that represents your unrealized psychospiritual potential. If you identify as transgender,

gender fluid, or nonbinary, some parts of yourself are lived and conscious, and others are unrealized possibilities. Regardless of your outer presentation, sexual orientation, or personality traits, inner opposites want to come into the world through you in service to individuation. If you have developed traits typically considered masculine, your inner opposite is likely to show up as female regardless of your sex, and vice versa. However, for many of us, our inner opposite—the image of our undeveloped potential—will most often appear in dreams as someone of the opposite sex.

In Jungian psychology, the polarities of masculine and feminine refer to psychological principles: differentiating versus integrating, part versus whole, fixity versus fluidity, competitive versus collaborative, known versus novel, and many others. Each of us has access to the full range of human potentials associated with masculine and feminine. Today, concepts like masculine and feminine feel uncomfortable when we equate them with outdated gender-role stereotypes. They feel stifling if we think of them as rules, such as women are—or should be—receptive, reflective, and relational, while men should be disseminating, decisive, and driven. They become more useful if we understand them as categories that help us group inner experiences, like yin and yang, eros and logos, or the alchemical sol and luna.

Jung encourages us to hold an integrative attitude: we are, all of us, both a woman and a man, psychologically speaking. Jung's investigations into alchemical imagery helped him formulate the idea of an inner union of opposites that occurs as the personality develops and results in the creation of a mysterious third. He observed this evolution in dreams. The integration and realization of *both* our masculine and feminine attributes are essential for the task of lifelong psychological development that Jung called individuation. Therefore, tending to the contrasexual other in dreams is work of the highest spiritual significance.

When an opposite-sex figure appears in a dream, experiment. See if understanding it as anima/animus unlocks meaning and enriches the dream's message. Just as with everything else in the psyche, there are no hard-and-fast rules. Not every opposite-sex figure in a dream represents the anima/animus, and these dynamics can be represented in other ways. As we have noted before, dream elements resist tidy categorization. Assigning the

label of anima/animus to a contrasexual figure is a place to start, not a conceptual straitjacket.

Key: Explore whether opposite-sex dream figures are images of anima/animus.

The anima/animus is the personified image of your unlived potential. It is compelling. Often it appears in dreams as an opposite-sex figure.

Animus

The animus is an archetypal figure that emanates from the vast psychic world of the collective unconscious and appears in a woman's dreams in many guises. He may show up as a man of power, such as a pilot, professor, or politician. He may inspire intellectual or creative life, embody assertiveness, or appear as a spiritual guide or wise man. The positive animus links a woman with helpful aspects of the masculine principle: agency, decisiveness, order, and the capacity for self-expression and authority. The animus may also have darker manifestations. He may appear as dominating, rigid, seductive, or violent. Dreams of the negative animus can be intense and painful but are always significant and can lead a woman to discover her depths. Positive or negative, the animus can appear in a great variety of forms. We have included several possible categories in the sections below, but this is not an exhaustive list.

> For what could be more abundant than dreams, and what more fascinating?
>
> —Synesius of Cyrene

Positive Animus

In its positive manifestation, the animus helps a woman get out into the world, express herself, and exert her will. According to Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz, "The inner man acts as a bridge to the Self. He personifies a woman's capacities of courage, spirit, and truth and connects

her to the source of her personal creativity."[2] Contact and communion with the animus creates a direct connection with the inner world and puts a woman in touch with the potential for wholeness and psychospiritual growth.

Animus as a Guide

The positive animus may show up as a guide. Here is the dream of a woman in midlife in which the animus takes an active, physical role. The dream corresponded with her beginning to move through fears of driving and traveling that had been constraining.

A Gentle Push

I am walking over a bridge and my girlfriend tells me it gets harder. There will be waterfalls, narrow passageways like tunnels, and slippery water tubes. We come to a water tube and I decide to do it slowly, like the person before me, a young woman using her foot. Then a guy is behind me, pushing me. I lose control but get through. Then I have to go through this tiny passageway on my back. It's too small, so I get out. Another guy waves me forward. I trust him, so I go back and the hand of someone I can't see pushes me forward.

One of the dreamer's life themes had been claiming her power and authority. When she is confronted with a water tube, the animus figure gives her a push. He initiates action and the dream ego must surrender control. This theme is repeated when the dream ego comes to a tight passage, but this time, the animus beckons her; she trusts him and moves forward. When the animus is portrayed as a physical and active figure, it can be in the service of developing boldness and agency.

A few years later, she had another dream in which the animus appeared as a different sort of guide. Here the animus is leading the dreamer inward.

Meeting the Farmer

Dad, my brother, and I stopped at a barn to meet a farmer. We were going to follow him on his daily routine. He said we should wash up and go to

the bathroom first. It took me a while to figure out how to use the bathtub and the toilet in this barn space, but I did. I didn't know why I was getting cleaned up when we were going to get dirty, I assumed, as I knew we would be riding horses. I got cleaned up anyway. I wanted to be going faster than I was, but I was in a new space and I didn't have a routine. When I went upstairs and outside, I got onto a horse and it took me up to the office of the man who would be leading us. I was aware of each plodding step of the horse under me. I didn't know how to ride a horse, but we got to our first stop okay. I was looking forward to what would be next. I expected I was going to get hot, sweaty, and dirty.

The dreamer starts the journey with her father and brother, images of familiar masculine qualities. The farmer image is different, and meeting him requires a letting go (of urine) and bathing to cleanse her of what she has accumulated from her life thus far. Like a ritual bath, this is a form of purification. As she follows the path to the leader's office, she finds herself on a horse. The power of her instincts is harnessed, and with its slow pace, the horse earns her trust and embodies patience. She begins to understand the journey will require earthy grit. As she prepares to get hot and sweaty in service to helping things grow, we can imagine a new psychospiritual potential awakening within.

Animus as Creative Inspiration and Muse

A primary feature of the positive animus is to connect a woman with her expressive energy. Women involved in creative endeavors frequently report dreams featuring men who encourage or inspire them. A forty-five-year-old married woman recently completed her PhD dissertation and felt a profound sense of accomplishment. She had the following dream:

Tom's Embrace

I am somewhere with many other people. Perhaps it is a kind of party. The mood is pleasant and I am happy to be there. I see Tom. He is thrilled to see me and comes toward me. He picks me up in his embrace and then I am sitting in his lap. It feels delightful.

Tom was the dreamer's friend, a man who had ready access to his originality, agency, and spirituality. The dream maker chose him to represent positive animus, and the dream confirmed her celebratory spirit and achievement.

An adult woman experienced the positive animus in the guise of a beloved high school art teacher in the following dream:

"I Couldn't Have Done It Without You"

I'm in my high school art classroom but I'm an adult. There are other people around long tables. I see Mr. K., my high school art teacher. I want to connect with him. Someone is cooking something in a big, red, cast-iron enamel pot. I see a hand with a wooden spoon stirring meat browning in the pot. There are golden peppers as well. It looks and smells delicious. As it cooks, the meat breaks up into discrete balls. Rather than clumping together, things are becoming more distinct. I can't wait to eat this and am hoping that Mr. K. will stay for the meal. Then I see that he is about to leave. I go over to him. He says to me, "Things can't be the same. But I want you to know I couldn't have done it without you." I am crying and hugging him. I wake up crying.

The dreamer's animus connects past and present. Mr. K. had encouraged her talent in high school, a time when she felt invisible. As is the case for many women, the dreamer's animus provided access to her creative and spiritual life. The embrace at the end confirms the secret partnership with the animus that she had been living as she honed her artistic skills through the years. Mr. K.'s statement, "I couldn't have done it without you," could be the dreamer's soul expressing gratitude for the dreamer's faithfulness to her creative process.

Animus as Promoter of Development and Growth

The animus often leads a woman toward future developments of personality. A forty-two-year-old woman had struggled for years in a difficult marriage. She made a commitment to a process of self-exploration and had the following dream:

Taye Diggs and the Emerald Ring

I am looking in a window of a jewelry store such as Tiffany's and I see a beautiful gold-and-emerald cocktail ring. Taye Diggs is there. He looks at my wedding band and says, "That will be hard to match." I want the ring. I feel like I want to do something frivolous even though I don't have the money.

This dreamer's animus is imaged as the actor Taye Diggs. The dreamer described him as handsome and remembered a television show in which Diggs portrayed a doctor—a healer. His enigmatic statement that her wedding band will be hard to match could mean it will be difficult to match her marriage, or that a gorgeous ring does not match her experience of her marriage as narrow and constraining. Rings can symbolize wholeness, sacred promise, and eternity, and this ring has great beauty and value. The Taye Diggs animus figure is heartening confirmation of her readiness to engage in the next phase of self-development, though he lets her know it will be hard.

The animus in its positive aspect is empowering. It may give the dream ego a needed push, honor her creativity, or encourage her psychological and spiritual growth. The animus can be represented as a mentor, craftsman, or wise man—or as a poet or bard with the gift of word and song. Most of all, the animus is the guide of souls, letting us know that we are seen, companioned, and loved.

Relationship Between the Ego and the Animus

To have good access to the guiding center of the personality, we will need to have a working relationship with the animus. This requires some humility on the part of the ego. The animus may show up requesting strange tribute or bearing unlikely gifts. If we are not open to what the inner other wants from us, life challenges may be difficult to overcome. A thirty-eight-year-old woman shared the following dream with her analyst:

The Doorknob

An earthy, blue-collar redneck white guy gives me an old-fashioned glass doorknob. I am filled with rage and disgust.

The dreamer was still angry when she discussed this dream days later. "Men like that are pieces of shit!" she said. When her male analyst suggested this man might be offering her something of value—doorknobs open doors, after all—she became enraged, treating him as she had treated the man in her dream. Both men had offered her something she angrily rejected. Rage and defiance were issues in many areas of this dreamer's life, making it hard for her to receive life's gifts. Though she was academically talented and enrolled in a graduate program, anger about "being controlled" made it difficult for her to comply with the demands of school. Several months after she had this dream, she suffered a significant personal tragedy.

Key: Consider the role the positive animus plays in your dream.

If you are a woman and have a positive opposite-sex figure in a dream, consider the following questions.

- In what role does he appear? Helper? Companion? Teacher?
- What is the medicine he is offering?
- What inner qualities might he represent? What is he inviting you to embrace?
- Do the themes present in the dream relate to what is going on in your life? Is the animus there to help you face an outer challenge? Commit to and celebrate your creativity? Deepen your spirituality?
- How does the dream ego respond to the animus? Does it reflect openness to what the animus is offering?

The Negative Animus

The negative animus can behave like an inner persecutor in the psyche of a woman. "The animus in his negative form is a parasite," wrote von Franz. "He personifies brutality, coldness, and obstinacy, and paralyzes a woman's

growth."[3] The nature of a woman's animus is influenced by her relationship with her father. If this has been painful or difficult, the animus is more likely to appear in a negative form. Animus in its negative aspect may be frightening, but its darkness is usually in service to the soul, requiring the ego to forfeit its false assumption of autonomy and recognize the objective reality of the psyche. The function of the animus in all its guises is to facilitate a relationship with the inner world.

Negative animus dreams can be daunting to consciousness: the dream ego justifiably feels threatened, and upon awakening the dreamer feels shaken. What we fear, revile, or devalue in a dream wants to bring something valuable to consciousness, even if delivered harshly—and there is a dark, impersonal force in the psyche. We must choose how we are going to meet it. As ever, conscious discernment is required. In the face of inner oppression and tyranny, the ego must find its stance.

Animus as Inner Critic

The negative animus may appear as a biting inner critic. Marie-Louise von Franz once had a dream where the animus appeared to her in this form:

> A murderous burglar came into my bedroom, and I woke up with a cry of fear. I went through what I had thought the evening before. I had had a very peaceful, quiet day, which could not account for such a terrible dream. Then I remembered that before going to bed I had thought, "The book I am writing is all nonsense and I must throw it away." I thought that *I* really thought that. Then when I reflected on the dream, I thought, "No, I don't think that. It thinks that in me and I needn't believe it. I don't think that at all." Then I could disentangle myself from the negative thought. I didn't accept it.[4]

Such a dream calls us to do the hard work of differentiation. We must decide what such an encounter asks of us. von Franz needed to disidentify from the attacking critiques of the negative animus. Most of the time, this content is not dealt with so easily and hard psychological work may be required to transform it.

Animus as Inner Persecutor

In dreams, the negative animus can show up as a ruthless male figure. Consider the following dream:

Torture

I find myself tied to a chair in a prison cell with a man standing over me. I have the awareness that he has been torturing me and will eventually kill me. I know there are more women outside in the hallway also tied to chairs. The man leaves, and I see a window high up behind me. I have a feeling that I can somehow escape through the window (even though I am tied to the chair), but I will have to move quickly. It seems impossible, but I believe I can do it. I see the women in the hallway surprised and hopeful that I can make it out.

The inner tormentor in our dreams can be a depiction of our tendency to persecute and torture ourselves with negative thoughts and judgments. Efforts to see the dream from the torturer's perspective will not help here—this figure is unambiguously persecutory. The dreamer had had a difficult relationship with her father, tended to hold herself to a high standard, and subjected herself to harsh inner criticism. The torturer in the dream, then, presented her with an image of her own self-persecutory tendency. The other women may refer to her mother, grandmother, and aunts, previous generations who faced similar dynamics from which they did not entirely escape.

Many of us have a critical inner voice. It may operate in the background unquestioned, as if fault-finding is justified and perfection is attainable. Such a voice can contribute to low moods and damaged self-esteem. When this mean-spirited part of ourselves appears in dreams, we have the opportunity to see where we are sabotaging ourselves. Negative animus dreams can help women see where they are undermining themselves. We can then differentiate the voice of the negative animus from that of reason and decency and determine whether the terrible judgments are accurate. Bringing the negative animus to consciousness allows us, like von Franz, to take a conscious stand.

How does one differentiate between a burglar who might represent a positive content rejected by the ego, and a burglar who is an image of the

negative animus, breaking in to rob us of our confidence? There is no straightforward answer, but the critical question is whether the burglar brings a new perspective or is attacking your life force. Is there evidence in the dream that the burglar means you harm? Does he threaten the dream ego with injury? Or does the dream ego assume the black-garbed stranger in the kitchen is malicious? Does he bring a transgressive but liberatory new perspective? Or does he seek to kill off new life? Most of the time, the attitude of the dream ego is likely to be suspect, but not always.

The negative animus is a force contrary to the ego's values. The dream ego, like our waking self, often leaps into meaning. It can be important to distinguish the specific dream image from the assumptions we—and our dream ego—tend to make. If a dream features a negative animus image with a genuinely malevolent aspect, engage its urgent call to understanding and transformation.

Transformation of the Negative Animus

Transforming the negative animus is not an easy task. "To transform the animus involves immense suffering, for it means nothing less than forsaking an old identity for a new one," writes von Franz. "It takes a great deal of courage. But the journey is well undertaken for the rewards are immeasurable."[5] The paradox is that even in its darkest manifestation, the negative animus *wants* to be met, changed, and integrated. Even while he torments us, the secret purpose of an encounter with the negative animus is that he wants us to grow.

Let's consider the dream of a woman with a history of childhood trauma:

A Hook to the Stomach

I lie sleeping in a single bed in a small room and awaken to a strange internal noise in my head. A piece of machinery falls out of my ear. I realize it is an implant and am shocked. I then hear a subtle noise behind me and spin around to see a creepy young man dressed in work clothes (and a high-vis shirt) hanging upside down from the window beside me. With stealth and agility he repositions himself, arching backward; he takes a hook from his utility belt and intentionally drives it into his belly.

I am frozen in terror. I realize I have to act, and I lurch forward to place my hands on his to drive the hook further in, hoping to kill him.

The dreamer associated the implanted machinery with negative internalized voices from childhood. Much like von Franz, the dreamer was beginning to recognize that the persecutory content did not really belong to her.

When the dreamer can eject the internalized, attacking, negative voices, *then* the creepy man impales himself with a hook. The creepy man reminded her of her own sadistic, punishing inner critic. Though sinister and threatening, when related to in the right way, he seeks self-sacrifice and transformation. The mythological motif of the hanged man signifies a transmutation of values. The Norse god Odin hung from a tree for nine nights, sacrificing "himself to himself," and returned with the knowledge of the sacred runes. In the tarot, the hanged man represents discernment, trials, and wisdom. Christ hung on the cross in a similar voluntary sacrifice.

Following is a remarkable dream that shows the substantial efforts the ego needed to make to transform the negative animus. The dreamer was a sixty-three-year-old woman.

Killing the Vampire

There is a man who reminds me of the phantom of the opera but is a vampire. His vampire teeth are buried in the back of his throat, which only a few people know. They come forward in cycles, like those of werewolves. I have to kill him because of his awful dark side, but by doing so will also kill the man who is elegant, gifted, and artistic. He wants me to kill him; he knows he has to die while he's in his benign phase. Because I know his vampire nature, I have to do it. I am really scared and sad. I don't know if I can do it. It has to be done in a particular way in order to reach the place deep in his throat where the fangs are rooted. He kneels and turns his head down. I have special scissors—small but strong. I am to push them deep into the nape of his neck and then cut. I do it, but it doesn't work. I can't get the scissors through the spinal bones. He bleeds, it hurts, and I am distraught. He says we'll have to go in through the front, and he opens his mouth. I can get my whole hand in

there—it's not a human throat. I have to cut through the soft palate at the back of his throat and push the scissors in deep, without relenting. This is almost more than I can bear, but I have to do it. I push the scissors in and cut. The blood gushes out. It is simply terrible. I am crying—sobbing—and pushing the scissors in and cutting wildly. I just want to get it over with so he won't suffer. There is blood everywhere. I wake up because my body is heaving.

This riveting dream reveals several important truths about the animus. The man is likened to the phantom of the opera, a vampire, and a werewolf, all images of negative animus predation that deny the dreamer an autonomous sense of selfhood in return for his gifts of brilliance and achievement. Because she is now conscious of the way this figure works in her psyche, she must do the hard work of getting to the root of the matter to remove his fangs. "In real life, too, it takes a long time for a woman to bring the animus into consciousness, and it costs her a great deal of suffering," writes von Franz. "But if she succeeds in freeing herself from his possession, he changes into an 'inner companion' of the highest value, who confers on her positive masculine qualities such as initiative, courage, objectivity, and intellectual clarity."[6] Although understandably shaken, the dreamer realized this dream demanded understanding. Something in the psyche had sacrificed itself and *wanted to be transformed*.

This dream is a powerful example of how the deep, nonpersonal psychic content of the negative animus can be changed. There is no recipe for transforming the negative animus except dedication to the inner life. Engaging with our dreams connects us with the unconscious, active imagination allows us to experience it more deeply, and depth psychological work helps us wrestle with outer-life conflicts and appreciate their correlates in the inner world. Dreamwork is central, for it reveals essential features of the psyche. If you have kept a dream journal for some time, go back through it and note anima/animus figures. How have they changed?

Whether it appears as benign or malignant, the role of the animus is to create a bridge between the ego and the guiding center of the personality that Jung called the Self. The negative animus will always be a bit of a paradox. We may need to differentiate ourselves from its corrosive, critical

attacks and take a stance against its relentless persecution. But we can also appreciate that even in its darkest form, it calls on us to transcend the constrictions of ego consciousness and attend to the wisdom of the deep interior. Positive or negative, the animus grants access to the transpersonal energies of the psyche. Whether he is the farmer who knows how things grow, the art teacher who has steadfastly watched over the development of the personality for decades, or the creepy man with a hook, the animus is ultimately "other" in a way that can fascinate or threaten but always points beyond the narrow perspective of ego toward that which is of spiritual significance.

Key: Dark, dangerous, or daunting opposite-sex figures may be images of animus. Notice how they appear and what your relationship is to them.

- Is the figure wholly negative? Is he really harmful or dangerous? Or is that the dream ego's assumption?
- If he is attacking, does his behavior correspond to a tendency to attack yourself? Does his attack remind you of the way that you talk to yourself, for example?
- How does the dream ego respond to this negative content?
- Is the negative animus a paradoxical figure? Is he asking you to grow even while he is attacking you?
- How might the animus figure be asking to be transformed through a confrontation with consciousness?

The Animus and the Shadow

Animus and shadow can appear together in dreams. These two inner figures can have a deep affiliation. An animus figure can invite us into a closer relationship with shadow, as in the following dream of a thirty-year-old single woman:

Not Invited

I am with a man, and he has his arms around me. We are sitting up very high, looking out over a fantastic view. Maybe it is in Colorado. He is sweet and kind and is married to a woman who is adventurous, athletic, and outdoorsy, but they are now separated. He is telling me how much he loves the Rockies, and that he plans to sell his business in order to commit more fully to his wife. I ask him what he and his wife will do once he has sold the business, but he hesitates to answer. I push him. I ask him why he doesn't want to tell me. "Because you are not invited," he tells me. I get defensive. "I was just asking," I tell him. But it is true that I had been flirting with him, trying to seduce him, and to live vicariously through his relationship with his wife.

In her personal life, the dreamer was yearning for connection and companionship. The wife represents shadow content that included traits such as adventurousness, confidence, and physicality that were undeveloped in the dreamer. The attractive, dedicated animus doesn't have much interest in the dream ego's agenda. He shows the dream ego a wider view of life and lets her know he values qualities other than those she has prioritized.

Key: Look for an invitation on behalf of the animus to connect more deeply with shadow.

- If an animus figure and a shadow figure appear in your dream, what is the relationship between them?
- What is the dream ego's relationship with each of them?
- Is the animus encouraging the dream ego to acknowledge shadow qualities?
- How does the relationship between the animus and shadow figures relate to your current life?

Journaling Prompt

Note the qualities of the shadow figure. What is most irritating or off-putting about this dream person? How is the animus inviting you to

reconnect with or claim these qualities?

Anima

The anima is the radical "other" in a man's psyche and plays many of the same roles as the animus. Jung called this mysterious and compelling force "the soul," and its purpose is to connect a man with his depths. "The anima in her developed form acts as a mediator between a man's ego and the Self," writes von Franz. "It relates him to the source of his being. Dreams show the feminine component of the male psyche transforming into this link which connects the dreamer with the source of life."[7] If a man can understand the anima's purpose, he can welcome her and accept her influence. But if he tries to dominate or demonize her, the anima will oppose and challenge him. As with the animus, there are myriad ways this content might show up in dreams, and the following sections provide some examples.

The Positive Anima

The positive anima helps a man integrate feeling and turn toward his inner life. She may appear as an earthy seductress or a woman of rarified wisdom and spirituality. However she manifests, her mission is to forge a relationship between consciousness and the unconscious.

Anima as a Bridge to Feeling

In many cultures, men are discouraged from expressing emotion. Tears may be seen as weakness, laughter as childish, fear as incompetence. Adapting to social norms leaves many men alienated from this aspect of their inner lives. Undeveloped capacities are carried by the anima and press for acknowledgment through our dreams.

Here are the dreams of two men in their midfifties. Both men demonstrated a strong drive to excel in their careers at the cost of not cultivating other parts of their personalities. In midlife they were called inward.

Wife in the Sea

I am standing on a sandbar in the ocean that's about fifty feet from shore. The water now looks rough, and the tide is coming in rapidly. I see my wife swimming quite a ways out, and I am alarmed. I yell that she needs to come in, but she just gives me a casual wave and continues swimming. Her head bobbing through the waves reminds me of a seal.

This dream may have something to say about both the inner and outer world. When we take a subjective lens, we note that a man often projects his feminine soul onto his wife. Therefore, dreams of his female partner may be anima images. Sandbars are partially submerged and usually disappear under water at high tide. The dream ego, then, has a tenuous stance amid the waters of emotion and the unconscious, far from the solid ground of ego. He begins to realize the great power of the sea, and the encounter makes him anxious. The dream ego—correlate of the waking, conscious personality—cannot skillfully navigate rough emotional seas. His anima, however, demonstrates confidence and good cheer. She exemplifies the attitude he must cultivate to go deeper into himself. The association to seals evokes Celtic Selkie lore—mythic creatures, usually female, that shapeshift from seals to humans. They may marry humans and have children but must return to their natural home—the sea.

As a correction to his outer relationship with his waking-life wife, the dream announces that his fear of emotions is his alone to bear. He may think his feelings are dangerous to his wife, but the unconscious shows him she is untroubled and skilled in the emotional world. If he can accept this insight, he may understand that his wife is a capable ally in navigating powerful feelings.

After decades of repression, a man may have little experience of his autonomous inner life. A strong ego can harness instinct, diverting its energy in service to conscious goals. Initially this may work well, but over time, life becomes impoverished because the man is not in touch with his instinctual, feeling side. This can be seen in the following dream from a second middle-aged man:

The Komodo Dragon

I am at a sushi tasting. There is a special sushi that is made from a scooped-out muscle from the inside of the eyelid of a Komodo dragon. The Komodo dragon is alive but sedated. The sushi is delicious. The Komodo dragon wakes up and starts chasing me. I am running away. It turns into a really hot woman, but I still have to keep running.

The Komodo dragon emerged 3.8 million years ago and, like many reptiles, remains fundamentally unchanged. Reptiles often represent the most primal aspect of the unconscious: raw, instinctive, and alien to the ego. There are many ways we sedate our incompatible instincts. We subdue anger with alcohol, grief with food, guilt with distractions. Here the ego successfully sedates the dragon of feeling life and consumes it in a way that could be construed as cruel and exploitative. But the illusion of control is shattered. The ego's plan to dine on the dragon is reversed, he flees, and she is revealed as the anima. The dream ego must wrestle with the conflict between desire and fear. Awake and demanding contact, the desirous anima will lay waste to the ego defenses, not to injure him but to set him in right relationship to his soul. We cannot choose what we desire; we can only discover it. It is a feeling value that rises from the deep interior. For many men, it is frightening to encounter what they truly want as it puts at risk their well-laid plans. The anima is the water of life, and without her all things become shades of gray.

The anima demands that a man relate to his feeling life. The following dream of a fifty-six-year-old married man shows the anima in this capacity:

Tell Me My Fate

I'm sitting in a large New England living room owned by Paul, a friend. There are male friends and also a woman. We are all gathered for a reunion. We're talking but I'm not aware of what's being said. I ask the woman, "Tell me my fate." The answer is unusual, because she comes over and hovers over me with her presence and her body. Then she gets off. I say, "Well, what is it?" She replies, "Not good: much agony and suffering." I start to brood and am not willing to accept it. I kind of walk off during this, and then make my way back over to her and ask in an imploring way, "Can't it be reversed?" She smiles and looks perplexed

but full of feeling. She says, “Yes, but it requires feeling,” and she prepares to leave. I’m fumbling and stammering, but I say, “Can I see you again sometime—in a few months, maybe?” She doesn’t say anything but is kind of nodding as she walks away. I feel like I’m asking her on a date. This is an old feeling (having to ask someone for a date) but it feels okay.

This dreamer was suffering in his inner and outer life. The dream ego feels compelled to relate to the woman in his dream. She demands that he connect to feeling. Through her, the dream delivers its medicine of a renewed relationship with his emotional life. It is hopeful that the dream ego was receptive and pursued the anima figure.

Anima as Healer and Comforter

The anima may come to a man as a healer and comforter, an archetypal role of the feminine in religious and mythological systems. A Jewish man had the following dream during a low point in his life:

The Blessing of the Virgin

I stand in front of a white marble statue of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ child in a Catholic church. High ceiling, dark-brown pews, classic church look and feel. The statue is on the right side of the church. It’s elevated on a brown base. The statue itself is maybe double life size. I feel grace. The church is quiet now. The whiteness carries something into my heart through my eyes. I drink the water. I feel the recalibration, the memory before my memory. This is enough. Is it? Maybe not. I stand. I renew my posture and breathe deeply. I feel uneasy. The grace is dissolving something. I am ready for this to dissolve: I feel grateful. The dissolution is an exhale. Some glassy shell is dissolved in milk. The milk is coming in through my eyes and into my chest. Breathe. The shell is dissolving, becoming thinner, like ice in a bowl of warm milk. I breathe. I stand. I roll my shoulders. The shell is thin; the shell is gone. The Virgin Mary withdraws into her statue. It is accomplished. I bow my head once in reverence. I take a step backward, turn to my right, and walk toward the entrance.

The dreamer had had a difficult relationship with his mother. Here, the anima appears in the guise of the Divine Mother, dispensing love that dissolves the thick carapace of his defenses. The dreamer experienced this dream as very healing. In both his inner and outer life he found himself able to take in positive aspects of the feminine.

Anima as a Bridge to Spirituality

A man's anima can connect him with the transpersonal. As with the animus, the anima functions as a bridge to the inner world of the archetypes and the numinous energy Jung called the Self.

Phoenix Warrior

I met a girl I went to high school with and we went on a date. In the dream, my wife had recently died and I was still grieving for her. We went to a park on the date. There was a large crowd of people there. Suddenly everyone looked up at the sky. There was a large, luminous cathedral on a cloud in the sky. The cathedral was white, and there were two statues of angels on either side that were as large as the cathedral. It was one of the most magnificent sights I have ever seen. Then a large glowing and glittering bird, at least twice the size of a human, flew from the cathedral. I understood the bird to be a phoenix. It flew relatively low over the crowd and then went out of sight. It came back, crashed to the ground, and then transformed into a man I can only describe as an Aztec eagle warrior. He picked up a feather from the wings he shed and it turned into a bladed weapon. He started stalking around, looking, I sensed, for someone to attack. However, there seemed to be only women and children around, and it appeared that he would not attack them. He looked at the girl I was on a date with, saw me, and I knew he was going to attack me. He swung at me twice, and I blocked his blows with my right arm. I felt it, but it did not hurt. I felt as if I had had some kind of test or initiation because he looked at me respectfully and walked away.

This dream occurred at a time of significant turmoil and transition for the dreamer, a twenty-nine-year-old man. He had just left a graduate program and was grieving the loss of a dream and professional identity, his wife was

seven months pregnant after years of infertility, and he had lost his father a few months earlier. The dream speaks to the grief that was part of these momentous transitions, but it also points to the promise of connection with the numinous. The dream woman he is dating seems to potentiate the vision of the cathedral in the clouds, along with the encounter with the phoenix and Aztec warrior. Later in the dream, the Aztec warrior attacks the dreamer after seeing the dreamer's date, engaging him in initiatory combat. The death of the wife in the dream may signal that an old way of relating to the feminine is passing. A new attitude is ascendant that will deepen his connection with the anima and with his heroic, warrior nature.

> As we wander ever further into the materialist desert that our civilization has become, our dreams are the only oases of spiritual vitality left to us. They represent our primordial habitat, our last wilderness, and we must protect them with as much fervor as the rain forests, the ozone layer, the elephant, and the whale.
>
> —Anthony Stevens

In the following dream of a twenty-six-year-old man, the anima connects the dreamer with an image that has a spiritual quality.

Paper Eagle

I am in a field with some trees around. It isn't a field I recognize and I get the sense that it is surrounded by many other fields. There are no buildings anywhere to be seen. I am crouching down, looking into the center of the field, which has medium-long grass. It is a still night and might be almost morning, as the sky is very clear with a few stars but almost grayish white. There is a crowd of people behind me, speaking gently and rustling around. I get the sense that many of them are friends or even family, but I don't feel that it is necessary to look to confirm this. We are all clearly waiting for something to happen, some event. In front of me, just to my left, is just one other person, a woman who is also crouching. I don't recognize this woman. She is around my age or

perhaps slightly older and has dark hair and an attractive face. She conveys an air of authority by the way she is looking into the field. I lean over to her and whisper, “What are we waiting for?” by which I mean me and all the other people behind me. She replies with these exact words, which she says matter-of-factly: “The paper-winged eagle is about to take off.” From the middle of the field a medium-sized bird rises into the air and hovers there.

When the ego attends to the inner woman, *then* the paper eagle takes off. Openness and attentiveness to the anima figure leads to the rising of the eagle, whose seemingly flimsy paper wings achieve ascendance. Everywhere associated with sky gods, eagles represent a spiritual principle that soars heavenward. The dream occurred at a time when the dreamer was making a deeper commitment to his relationship, and the feelings in the dream were wonder, enchantment, and tranquility—affirmation of his new inner stance toward his outer-world relationship.

Relationship Between the Anima and the Ego

When we explored the animus, we saw that the ego must be in right relationship to this powerful inner energy to receive its gifts. The following dream is that of a man who had recently called off an engagement with a woman he describes as difficult. The dream ego is receptive to the gifts of the anima but unable to receive them easily.

The Amulet

In my dream, a beautiful woman approached me, leaned forward, and tapped me on the forehead in the area of my third eye. I saw a bright light. Then she held out an amulet, a blue stone on a leather band. She reached forward to hang it around my neck and fasten the clasp, saying, “This is to heal your heart and help you find your way home.” I bent forward to receive the gift, then stopped and thought I should fasten it around my neck myself. I fumbled with the clasp and accidentally dropped the amulet.

As the dreamer was mourning his relationship loss, the anima showed up in her healing capacity. In bending forward to receive the amulet, the dream ego shows deference, but *when* the ego takes over to fasten the clasp, *then* the amulet is dropped. This dream was accompanied by a synchronicity: the sound of the amulet dropping was so real that the dreamer awakened and looked for it on the floor. In the morning he found that a box of tile and marble samples had fallen off a shelf below his bedroom. They had been chosen by his former fiancée for a kitchen remodeling project.

Key: Notice how the positive anima appears in your dream.

If you are a man and a woman shows up in a positive role, she might be an image of positive anima.

- In what role does she appear? Benevolent guide, nurturer, or sexual partner?
- What is the medicine she is offering?
- What qualities is she inviting you to embrace?
- How does your dream ego relate to her? Is he closed off, resistant, fascinated?
- How do the themes present in the dream relate to matters in your current life?
- Does the anima invite expansion, such as enhanced feeling, spirituality, or life force?
- Does the dream reflect openness to what the anima is offering?

The Negative Anima

Like the animus, the anima can show up in a negative guise in a man's psyche. A chronic suspicious, dismissive, or hostile attitude toward the unconscious can constellate anima figures that are critical, rejecting, or antagonistic. A man's early relationship with his mother affects the development of his anima in a particularly influential way. If the maternal

bond was problematic, he may experience the withholding, shaming, or attacking side of the anima.

A thirty-four-year-old male steamfitter dreamed:

Get Out!

I'm in the car with my ex-girlfriend, and she starts criticizing and belittling me as she used to do when we dated. At first I put up with it passively, but then I realize that I am driving. I don't have to put up with this anymore. I stop the car and tell her with confidence and determination to get out.

Much like Marie-Louise von Franz and her dream of the burglar, this dreamer was able to mitigate the effects of the negative anima by standing up to the critical, shaming inner voice. Discernment is required. Here, the dream ego takes a stand against a persecutory inner content, but often the negative anima will be a force that paradoxically encourages our growth through its attacks.

A man in his twenties who frequently found it difficult to be assertive with women wanted to end his relationship with his girlfriend but could never find the right moment to voice his feelings when he had the following dream:

Woman with a Spear

I'm walking along a path through a dense forest at night. I'm aware that I don't know my way very well, and I become increasingly anxious that I will get lost. Suddenly a feminine figure appears before me on the path. She holds a long spear pointed just at my heart. I feel paralyzed, as if I can't move or speak. With one thrust she could end my life, but I somehow know that this isn't her intention. "All you have to do," she says, "is speak to me. Then I will help you." I try to find my voice but it gets stuck in my throat. I wake up.

The dreamer was experiencing emotional paralysis with a girlfriend he found overbearing. The anima figure's menace is in service to provoking self-expression: *Speak up!* If the dreamer could rise to forthrightness, he would be much more likely to improve (or end) his relationship with his girlfriend—and experience the anima as supportive and helpful. The not-so-secret agenda of the negative anima is that we heed the call to individuation from our inner world.

Key: If the anima appears in its negative aspect, pay attention to the role it plays.

- How does the anima figure treat the dream ego? Is this how you treat yourself at times?
- Do you need to stand up to an inner critic?
- What is the anima figure asking of your dream ego?
- What is your dream ego asked to do, change, or sacrifice? How might this correspond to waking life? For example, what outdated attitude has to die?

The Anima and Shadow

As with the animus, there is often a connection between anima and shadow. The following dream illustrates how the anima encourages the dreamer to reckon with shadowy aspects of himself:

The Corpse Beneath the Floorboards

I enter my bedroom and find a friend sitting on the sofa. She is wearing a scarf around her head and burning incense. She tells me she finds the energy in my room menacing. I suggest this might be because the room is on two separate levels or because the light is bad. Then I remember that a corpse is hidden beneath the floorboards, and I realize this is the reason. Details of how this corpse came to be there begin to come back to me. It was a murder, and I was involved. My role was to lure the man upstairs, where another person would strike him over the head. I can't believe that

I ever allowed myself to forget this had all happened. My sense of guilt increases, and I receive anonymous text messages alluding to the murder. I begin to feel that I will not be able to live with myself until I confess.

The dreamer had been in analysis for three years and was feeling a strong desire to change. His father had committed suicide when the dreamer was fourteen, and there is a sense that the corpse might be his father. The corpse represents a shadowy side of himself—perhaps those parts associated with his father—that has been hidden beneath the floorboards for all these years. The dream ego's guilt indicates increasing awareness. The anima begins to facilitate a needed reconnection with shadow by drawing attention to what has been concealed.

Key: Note how the anima encourages a connection with shadow.

When anima and shadow appear in the same dream, consider their relationship with each other.

- What is the relationship between the anima and shadow figures in the dream?
- What is the dream ego's relationship with each of them?
- How might the anima be inviting an engagement with the shadow?
- How does the dream dynamic relate to your current life situation?

Journaling Prompt

What are the key features of the shadow image in your dream? What is irritating or off-putting about this dream figure? How is the anima inviting a connection?

The Inner Marriage

The anima/animus represents the potential we must integrate to become whole. It persistently demands that we grow. At first, the anima/animus

holds tremendous energy because much of our potential is stored in it; when we're young, there is so much we have yet to discover. It comes as provider, coach, lover, poet, guide, and more. In all its forms, it seeks to rouse the ego and move us toward our destiny. Over time, the ego and anima/animus grow closer; this often constellates dreams of the sacred marriage. Then we will have begun to realize our fullness—the goal of individuation. The journey to the sacred marriage takes many years, and the dance with anima/animus moves through cycles of love and suffering. The inner partner may seem demonic, then divine; appear first as adversary, then ally. When we understand its mission, we can embrace it in all its forms.

Wedding Dreams

Weddings waft us into the mythic realm of sacred union, an innate human longing for harmonious completion. Is there anyone who didn't see Prince William and Kate Middleton's wedding? How about Prince Harry and Meghan Markle? The film industry has long grasped the gasp of marriage: Maria and Captain von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *The Princess Bride*, and many more.

A young man who lived in New York City had been repeatedly wounded in relationships with women. He dreamed he was to marry a woman at the information booth at Grand Central Station. It is a round booth with white marble walls in the center of the main concourse, above which soars a "celestial ceiling" painted with constellations of the zodiac and stars. The psyche celebrates the steps inner partners take toward each other on the way to the wedding.

A middle-aged married woman dreamed that she was running late to arrive at her own wedding. In spite of her best efforts, obstacles kept appearing that rendered it impossible for her to achieve this inner union. Dreams of weddings tell us about the inner marriage.

Marriage in the outer world symbolizes the lifelong journey to marriage in the inner world. Imperfect human partners experience cycles of love, conflict, effort, and suffering in the struggle to refine themselves within the constraints of a partnered relationship. Meanwhile, each person's ego and

the inner opposite are on a journey to a sacred marriage, the lifework of individuation and goal of the *opus*.

Here is the dream of a ninety-year-old woman whose health was failing. Her life had been full, with children and grandchildren, a robust career, and many accolades. As her body declined, her inner life blazed.

Orange Orchard

I am in an orchard, and the scent of orange blossoms is all around. I dance between the trees and feel wonderful. I look up and see the Cristo de la Concordia. I feel enraptured and can barely stand the intensity of love between me and the statue. I feel like I am swooning. Next, I am in the hand of Christ; he's as huge as the Concordia. He brings me close to his face. I know he will kiss me. I see his eyes. I awake.

The animus appears as a spiritual figure calling the ego to act as a vessel for the divine. The orange blossoms evoke fertility; their pollination brings forth bright orange spheres, round like a mandala, suggesting the Self. The dreamer dances through the grove as if she, too, were blossoming, open to receive that which will bring her to fullness. Like the Bernini statue *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, the image of Christ comes to her as a lover, drawing her close. At the end of her life, she felt wedded to the eternal.

Key: Images of union reflect key developments in the inner world.

Images of the union of opposites appear in dreams to reflect a process of deep integration.

- Is there a union with a lover or a wedding in your dream?
- Does the dream show a union with an anima or animus figure? Does this partnership speak to a psychological culmination?
- In dreams, sexual intercourse can symbolize psychospiritual union and integration.

The sacred marriage is a great mystery. We cannot predict who we will become in our fullness, but if we have courted the inner other in our life, we may welcome its embrace and cherish its gifts. Because of its nature as profoundly other, the anima/animus will always lead us into the depths, even when it manifests in its negative form. It is the mediator between the ego and the transpersonal center of the psyche that Jung called the Self. When we are in right relationship to it, it can behave as a guide that offers us access to our spiritual center and moves us toward individuation.

10

The Self

The Guiding Center

Ultimately the Self is the dreamer, the sender of the dream, and the interpreter of the dream. We are only the clown who watches it all.

—Marie-Louise von Franz

In 1927, Jung had a significant dream, discussed later in this chapter, that confirmed for him that the goal of psychological development was "the path to the center, to individuation."[1] He came to call this center of the psyche "the Self," and he eventually capitalized the word to underscore its transpersonal nature. Jung's notion of the Self is central to his theories. It refers to a transcendent reality beyond the limits of the conscious personality that sustains us and provides us with an experience of being connected to the infinite. It is an archetype of wholeness and an image of the unifying principle. Jung wrote of the Self that "it might equally be called the 'God within us.'"[2]

As the mysterious mover that impels our unfolding, the Self is "the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning."[3] While our egos diligently negotiate challenges in the inner and outer worlds—managing tasks, deadlines, relationships, feelings, urges, and impulses, to name a few—the Self at our center concerns itself with the eternal. Attuned to the truth of our fullest potential, it steers our becoming in ways subtle and substantial. When Jung remarked that the psyche is a self-regulating system, he was referring in part to the action of the Self as it seeks to align ego consciousness with deeper knowledge of the path we are meant to walk.

In mythology, religion, and dreams, encounters with the Self are marked by a feeling of awe. Jung wrote of the inner companion; thirteenth-century Persian poet Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi called it "the Friend," and for twentieth-century Native American holy man Black Elk, the "center is

really everywhere."[4] Human history abounds with symbolic descriptions of the Self in sacred texts, poetry, literature, music, art, and myth. The Self is metaphorically described as the pearl of great price; the hidden treasure; the lotus growing in the mud; the alpha and omega; and the still, small voice.

Relativization of the Ego

"The experience of the self," wrote Jung, "is always a defeat for the ego."[5] This statement expresses an essential truth about the relationship between our conscious, waking self and the transpersonal. Jung used the term "relativization of the ego" to refer to the realization that our conscious personality rests on a transpersonal basis—the Self—that is infinitely greater. Dreams illustrate the relationship between ego and Self and can shake us up because they challenge the ego's desire for supremacy.

The Maker of Dreams

Marie-Louise von Franz stated that "dreams are the letters which the Self writes to us every night, telling us to do a bit more of this, or to do a bit less of that."[6] Throughout this book, we have spoken frequently about the dream maker, that inner intelligence that observes us, holds our destiny, and prods us toward it. Dreams have a connection with the guiding center of the personality that Jung called the Self. In that sense, the dream maker *is* the Self. The remarkable wisdom behind our dreams comes from the transpersonal heart of the psyche.

Therefore, every dream carries the intention of the Self—to guide us toward individuation. However, some dreams reveal the presence of the Self in a more direct and immediate way. Such dreams are marked by powerful feelings of reverence, terror, sublime joy, and above all, awe.

Images of the Self in Dreams

Dreams featuring images of the Self open a portal to meaning that transcends personal history. These dreams are numinous, initiate us into the independent reality of psychic life, and provide access to timeless domains of the soul. Such dreams may offer a rapid release of tension and fear, a

lightning flash of clarity about a particular problem, or an overwhelming wave of deep solace. Self dreams catalyze healing, even when the Self visits us in a negative or frightening form. Jung was very clear that encountering the numinous *is* the thing that heals. In a letter he writes, "The approach to the numinous is the real therapy and inasmuch as you attain to the numinous experiences you are released from the curse of pathology."[7] Most modern people won't encounter the divine on a holy pilgrimage or through fasting and prayer. Though we may no longer have access to numinous experience through these traditional methods, we still have an immediate, personal, and nightly doorway to the deep wisdom of the Self in our dreams.

How does the Self appear in dreams? Although the list is almost endless, Jung offers us some examples:

> The content of all such symbolic products is the idea of an overpowering, all-embracing, complete or perfect being, represented either by a man of heroic proportions, or by an animal with magical attributes, or by a magical vessel or some other "treasure hard to attain," such as a jewel, ring, crown, or, geometrically, by a mandala. This archetypal idea is a reflection of the individual's wholeness, i.e., of the self, which is present in him as an unconscious image.[8]

The Self is often represented by human figures: a guide, hero, healer, child, or even a deity. Religious images from crosses to crowns, stones to stars can represent the supraordinate. Animals and symbolic treasures can symbolize the Self, and sometimes the presence of the Self is implied, like a gentle smile. Above all, the Self in dreams evokes strong emotions, whether a wave of love or awe or a terror that shatters. Such dreams are *encounters*, and they demand that we understand and heed them in waking life.

The Self often appears in its beneficent aspect. It may manifest in dreams at times of crisis or uncertainty as a gift of grace and wordless companioning. The dark side of the Self also visits us in dreams. When the ego resists the Self's direction, the Self may intervene in a way the ego perceives as terrifying. Although there is no limit to how this transpersonal energy may express itself, we next discuss some recurring patterns of how the Self may appear.

The Self as Human Figure

Sometimes the Self visits us in our dreams in the guise of a person. It might be someone known to us, a stranger with supernatural powers, or even a child.

The Self as Healer

Jung explicitly noted the healing function of the Self, so it is no wonder it shows up in dreams in the guise of doctor, therapist, or other healer who brings renewal and restoration. If you are in therapy, your therapist may carry a projection of the Self, showing up in dreams as a healer with a divine dimension. Early in his career, one of Jung's patients fell in love with him and could not be dissuaded from her affections despite Jung's interpretive attempts. She dreamed:

> Her father (who in reality was of small stature) was standing with her on a hill that was covered with wheat-fields. She was quite tiny beside him, and he seemed to her like a giant. He lifted her up from the ground and held her in his arms like a little child. The wind swept over the wheat-fields, and as the wheat swayed in the wind, he rocked her in his arms.[9]

Jung connected the patient's father with himself, the doctor, and recognized from this dream that the patient saw him "symbolically in a form which can only be described as a vision of God,"[10] the semi-divine father-lover who presides over the fertile fields and cradles the dreamer. This larger-than-life figure carried the numinous qualities of the Self and was therefore a powerful and positive factor in her healing.

Healing does not always come the way the ego expects or desires. A man in a profound midlife healing process had the following dream:

Recovery

I'm hiking on a snowy mountain with a group of people who are younger than I am. They are a little bit ahead of me, sitting on a rock, and I am trying to catch up with them. The way up is very steep, and I start to slip.

Below us is a sheer cliff and far below that is endless icy wilderness. The snow starts to give way under me, and I slip and then I'm falling. It's a long way down, and I wonder to myself whether I will survive. Even if I do, how will I ever be rescued? It is so remote. The next thing I know, I wake up in a hospital as a quadriplegic. The physical therapist is a man around my age. He picks me up very tenderly and places me beside him at the edge of a pool. Then, completely with my consent, he puts me in a special chair that is meant to go in the water. Instead of pushing me into the water, he tips the chair over so that I slip headfirst into the water. I splutter and thrash and somehow make it to the edge of the pool. I am overjoyed because I now know it will be possible to learn to walk again.

This dream provides a view of an overarching theme: trying to keep up on the difficult climb up the steep mountain of life. He was always trying to catch up to where he thought he should be. The snowy landscape depicts the frozen quality of his feeling function, followed by a fall into cold nothingness—an image of existential despair from which he is mysteriously rescued. The physical therapist carries the healing power of the Self: he performs a baptismal ceremony that upends the dream ego and leads to an intimation of rebirth, wholeness, and joy. The dreamer associated the physical therapist with his analyst, but even when the dream healer appears in the form of an outer doctor, it also points to the inner therapist alive in each of us. The healer is an archetypal figure, represented in myriad and often miraculous ways.

A woman in midlife who suffered from chronic pain on her right side had a dream with an unlikely healer:

Future Self

I'm at a corner store and I buy a lot of stuff. After I pay for it, I realize I have to carry all these bags many blocks home to Brooklyn. As I'm considering this problem, an older woman starts talking to me, and she tells me I should get a scab on my back checked that has been taking a while to heal. She's kind of annoying and pushy and very talkative, but she actually doesn't bother me and I like her; there's something about her. I can tell that other people are probably easily turned off by her.

Then, out of nowhere, she takes me from behind and threads her arms under my armpits and then brings her hands to the back of my head and holds the base of my head in her hands, like she's giving me a chiropractic adjustment. I just stay still, and it's like magic she's doing. She is cradling my whole body as she holds my head. Kind of like I'm in her lap. I totally surrender. I'm almost crying; I am overcome with emotion that is indescribable. We have a special connection. I feel my right leg tingling and hope she is healing my right side. She finishes and maybe we both cry a little? She says I'm so special. I have gifts. I think she is a doctor and I want to know where. When I wake up, I think maybe she is my future self.

The dream ego initially perceives the older woman as an annoying, pushy person who turns others off. But *when* the dream ego's attitude is friendly and accepting, *then* she receives the woman's gifts, transpersonal powers of healing that point the dreamer toward a promising future. This dream, like many a fairy tale or myth, shows that the capacity for relatedness to an animal or stranger is rewarded by an encounter with a divine or magical being.

Key: The Self may appear as a therapist, doctor, or healer.

- Does your dream feature a doctor, therapist, or other healer? The dream figure may be an image of the healing function of the Self.
- How is this figure helping you orient to future health and growth?
- What in your life relates to the Self appearing in this guise?

The Self as Child

The child is an archetypal symbol of potential associated with the Self. The child is vulnerable to attack, abandonment, and illness—yet in myth, fairy tale, and religion, the child prevails. Born out of the darkness of the unconscious and begotten from the depths of the Great Mother, the child is

a personification of vital forces beyond the limits of consciousness. According to Jung, the child

> represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself. It is, as it were, an incarnation of *the inability to do otherwise*. . . . The urge and compulsion to self-realization is a law of nature and thus of invincible power, even though its effect, at the start, is insignificant and improbable.[11]

As with any dream image, children can represent many different things. Not every instance of a child in a dream is a manifestation of the Self, but some could be understood this way, as in this dream of a man in his thirties:

The Hawk

I found a dead hawk on the ground in my backyard. I picked it up and suddenly it transformed into a living, newborn baby boy. I brought the baby inside to care for it. It aged months within minutes as I played with the baby and showed my wife and kids. Then I became aware that there was an alert in the neighborhood of a "missing baby." Flashing lights were seen as police cars patrolled the nearby streets. I was hesitant to return the baby, so I kept it inside for a short while longer so I could spend more time with it.

The dreamer was approaching a life transition and engaged in a process of self-reflection and healing. The hawk, perhaps symbolizing spiritual potential, has died and been reborn as a baby, bringing the promise of new life. Like many a mythical infant, this dream baby grows with preternatural speed, revealing that he is no ordinary child. The dream ego cherishes the baby, knowing he can't keep him. In the Japanese fairy tale "Princess Moonbeam," the moon's daughter comes to live with a childless couple but must eventually return to the sky. The Divine Child is not ours to keep but must be returned to the archetypal realm. The ego can relate to the transpersonal energies of the Self but cannot own or control them. If it tries to do so, misfortune will result.

> In the end, the only events in my life worth telling are . . . inner experiences, amongst which I include my dreams and visions. These form the *prima materia* of my scientific work. They were the fiery magma out of which the stone that had to be worked was crystallized.
>
> —C. G. Jung

Key: The Self may appear in dreams as a child.

- Does your dream feature a child or infant?
- Does this image have a strong emotional valence? Might it carry transpersonal significance?
- Does the dream indicate the child is a symbol of the urge toward wholeness and growth?

The Self as Companion and Soul Guide

Dreams of the Self offer us images of a source that is bigger, richer, and deeper than ego and assures us of abiding guidance and companioning. A wisdom figure may take the form of a wise old man or woman—or come disguised as a homeless person, trickster, or thief. Many a tale tells us to attend to the hag outside the castle and heed the dwarf or beggar. Political figures, historical leaders, and teachers can also represent the Self.

A Jungian training candidate had this dream:

Miraculous Migration

I am on the west coast of South America. I am lost and make my way to the beach. I am out of the jungle, can better get my bearings, and might see a ship. Suddenly a small pontoon plane zooms in and lands on the water. I swim out to it and get in. I am soaking wet but all right and relieved. The plane's pilot is one of my analyst teachers! We take off, headed north along the coastline. We are flying low so everything is distinct below and to my right, yet I can see the horizon ahead and to the

left. I look down and see herds of animals migrating slowly up the coast: rhinoceros, elephants, unidentifiable beasts, and even whales swimming just beneath the water's surface. They are all moving northward slowly, certainly—it is beyond words.

The dreamer, feeling overwhelmed with the challenges of training, was presented with an image of the inner guide as a wise and admired teacher. He provides the dreamer with a higher, wider perspective: the flow of life itself, moving as ineluctably and knowingly as migrating animals. The dreamer reported that it was indescribably beautiful, another attribute of the Self.

Dreams rarely give us specific advice on matters in our waking life, but the Self may show up to offer encouragement and provide a more encompassing look at conscious dilemmas. Sometimes people dream of Carl Jung, an embodiment of the archetype of the wise old man, as a guide. A man in his twenties considering a graduate program dreamed:

Jung on the Beach

I'm on holiday at the beach. I walk toward the water and sit on the sand, gazing out at the water. I'm alone despite other people on the beach and the usual beach activities. Then Jung is sitting next to me, dressed in a typical jacket and pants, and he puts his arm around my shoulders. He says, "We really must take better care of you young ones."

The dreamer awakened feeling touched by Jung's presence. The dreamer, who experienced doubt about his ability, felt companioned by this dream and moved forward with his educational plans.

Key: The Self may show up as a companion and soul guide.

- Does your dream feature a teacher, a wise companion, or soul guide?

- Does the dream feature an image of a wise old man or woman, perhaps in an unlikely guise?
- How might this dream be offering you encouragement from your guiding center?

Journaling Prompt

What is the perspective of your dream ego? What is the perspective of the soul guide? Where do they differ, and where are they alike?

The Self as Magical Animal

Everyday encounters with animals can move us and fill us with wonder. The hummingbird at the feeder inspires delight and astonishment, and a snake shooting out from under the porch is a jolting surprise. Large, powerful animals like elephants and whales fill us with awe, and sharks and grizzlies are fearsome. It's no wonder that the pantheons of ancient religions feature gods in animal form.

Dream animals usually symbolize the inherent power of instinctual life. They frequently show up in dreams as majestic, frightening, or awe-inspiring. Importantly, dream animals associated with the Self usually display magical qualities—they may talk, have supernatural abilities, or be somewhat anthropomorphic. A Scandinavian woman in a life transition dreamed:

Polar Bear

It is winter and I am in my old hometown up in the North. I am with a girlfriend in a two-seater white pickup truck with an open back; my friend is driving. We are driving on a broad road by the sea. I'm giving my friend directions, as she doesn't know her way around; she is from another country where I lived for twenty years. It is snowing, and I spot a large polar bear about ten meters away by the side of the road. It has seen me also and now looks directly at me. I am very scared. Instead of turning around, driving away from the polar bear, I tell my friend to drive past the bear. I am afraid it would catch us if we were to turn around. To my surprise, I see the polar bear is galloping full speed next to the truck,

almost passing us. We drive faster and faster, and the polar bear runs even faster. I look ahead and think we have passed it and turn around to see that the polar bear is now in the back of the truck. There is no window between me and it. I see its big face in profile, breathing in and out. It is not looking at me any longer. It is resting in the back of the truck, and to my surprise, I am not so scared of it.

The dream ego is in her hometown, but her shadow friend is unfamiliar with the country, depicting an ambivalent psychic situation. It is cold and snowing, often symbolic of a frozen feeling state, but there is fierce, instinctual life: a polar bear. Bears are a powerful symbol, and polar bears are especially numinous as a majestic form of life in an austere land—and this polar bear can outrun a truck. Although the polar bear first inspires fear and annihilatory anxiety, the dreamer learns that this image of the Self wants to companion her.

A woman who worked as a school director in South America dreamed of a snake that carried the power of the Self.

Bejeweled Snake

I am in my childhood bedroom. I notice a tiny but fully formed boa constrictor on the floor. I put a glass over the top of her to observe her. She is beautiful, and I am taken by her markings. I notice she has a gemstone, a ruby, on her head between her eyes. I follow her out of her room, which opens into the courtyard of a school. I follow her. As I follow her, she grows larger and larger and moves faster and faster. She goes in and out of each room before finally coiling herself among the instruments in the music room.

We often react to snakes in dreams and waking life with primordial fear, but this dreamer perceives the specialness of a tiny boa constrictor and goes toward it. Crowned with a precious stone at the place of the third eye, this is no ordinary snake. When the dream ego shows appreciation and reverence, the snake grows and touches each room of the dreamer’s beloved school before settling in the music room. The composer Leonard Bernstein said,

"Music . . . can name the unnamable and communicate the unknowable,"[12] as has the mysterious, magical, ruby-crowned snake.

Key: The Self may appear as a magical animal.

Animals that appear in dreams and convey a feeling of numinosity may be images of the Self.

- Does the animal in your dream inspire awe?
- Does it have supernatural abilities or behave in an unusual way?
- Why do you imagine your dream maker sent you this image at this time in your life?

Childhood Dreams

Children's dreams are often full of mythic imagery associated with the Self. We may remember one or more childhood dreams all our lives. These often remain vivid and filled with feeling, whether fantastic or frightening. Jung felt that the mythological motifs of significant childhood dreams arose from the collective unconscious, to which we are closer when we are young. "Childhood dreams still remembered by adults are not just any dreams," he wrote. "If things made a deep impression on us in childhood, we may assume that something highly important lies within what impressed us as such . . . something which is meaningful for the whole later course of life."[1]

Such dreams can pose questions we continue to ponder throughout the subsequent decades. Alternatively, they may offer us a vision toward which we will strive. Just as King Arthur's knights were granted a vision of the grail before they set off to seek it, a childhood dream can prefigure our personal quest and serve as a symbolic touchstone on our life path.

Jung recalled a dream from age three or four that revealed an underground chamber inhabited by a strange, primal god. Jung only began to understand the dream some fifty years later. "Through this childhood dream I was initiated into the secrets of the earth," Jung wrote toward the end of his life. "It was an initiation into the realm of darkness. My intellectual life had its unconscious beginnings at that time."[2]

The Self as Religious Image

It is not uncommon for the Self to show up in dreams as a religious figure or image. At thirty-nine, Canadian Fraser Boa had a midlife crisis, and sought help from a Jungian analyst who told him in their first meeting that he should attend to his dreams. Boa was skeptical and told his analyst he had never had a dream in his life. To his surprise, he recalled a dream the next morning:

> I was walking on the ancient rocks of Georgian Bay. The unevenness of the rock face made walking difficult. When I looked down to steady myself, I realized I was walking on the face of Christ.[13]

Boa had had a glimpse of the transpersonal substrate that sustains us. A Polynesian saying has it that we are "standing on a whale, fishing for minnows." Most of the time we only notice the minnows. We go to work, cook dinner, and take the car for an oil change. We're busy with life's constant demands and forget that we're standing on a whale. In Boa's time of crisis, an image of the Self appeared in his dream to reveal that a transpersonal aspect of existence was sustaining him. He later became a Jungian analyst, author, and filmmaker.

Even if a formal religious creed is not part of your life, the Self may manifest in the imagery of a traditional belief system. A man experiencing a midlife crisis dreamed:

Mysterious Text

I am walking around the corner of an old, not-in-use church in what feels like a town in Pennsylvania. Overcast sky, lots of plants and weeds. The back wall of the church has a long piece of text, a title, and maybe ten lines of text, chiseled, or raised, or embossed. It's in another language that I can't read. I feel something profound, and I feel fascination and respect even though I can't understand.

The dreamer, who had not been raised in the Christian tradition, had never lived in Pennsylvania but associated it with a bold beginning: "In order to form a more perfect union." The church is abandoned but contains a potent image of communication from the divine center. The dream maker was making it clear that—as ever—the treasure will be found in an unfamiliar, abandoned place in the psyche. The dreamer has found a source of meaning in another language, though he is not yet capable of understanding it.

The dreamer of the following dream was raised as a Roman Catholic but had not participated in formal religious observance for some time:

Arctic Bird

I'm in an arctic research station. A researcher calls me over to tell me about an unusual observation. She shows me a map of a bird's flight

pattern that they've recorded. It is erratic and quite unusual. The bird flies in direct straight lines between some points and looping or arching lines between other points. The landscape over which the bird has flown is a dynamic, moving mosaic of ice and water, and I'm amazed by the bird's ability to navigate such a cold, treacherous world. Then on the map she shows me where the bird has stopped. Its location has not changed in ten years. I wonder if it has died. My coworker says she doesn't think so. Then I realize the bird's location on the map is the same as our research station. I ask my coworker and some other scientists who are standing nearby why they haven't gone to the bird. It must only be a few feet from where we are standing now! I look behind me under a chair and see what looks like a gray ball of frozen snow and ice. It breaks open to reveal a humble bird with a round body and mottled brown feathers. It lightly flaps its wings and moves around the room. One of the other researchers becomes ecstatic, leaping and hollering with joy. This is his first observation of the incredibly rare bird species. I realize the bird must not have moved in so long not because it was dead but because it was sitting on an egg. It settles back into its spot and furls the white undersides of its wings over its body and transforms back into the camouflaged gray ball of ice. I turn away for a moment to engage with my colleagues. When I look back, the bird is gone and Jesus is there. He is lying on his back peacefully, eyes closed in sleep or death (I cannot tell which), clothed in a deep-blue robe and levitating at chest height. I am in awe.

The dream came to the dreamer during a turbulent time marked by depression. Though she had achieved career goals much earlier than she expected, her work left her unfulfilled, alone, and empty. At a time when she was searching for meaning, the dream provided a transpersonal image of awe and peace. The Self showed up as a bird able to navigate the icy vastness, then disguised as an innocuous ball of ice. It reveals itself to the joy of the researchers, and incubates an egg, a new beginning. The Self, imaged as Jesus, has been there all along.

Key: The Self may show up in dreams as religious imagery.

- Has the dream maker used religious imagery to convey the transpersonal power of the Self?
- Did the dream bring reverence, awe, and abiding comfort?

The Dark Side of the Self

Though the Self often offers experiences of healing and guidance in dreams, its numinosity can also be dark. If we resist the divine within, we may have a shattering encounter with the Self. Dreams that show the dark side of the Self reflect an imbalanced relationship between the ego and the transpersonal dimension of the psyche and confront us with the requirements of individuation. All religions recount stories of the dark side of God. When Jonah refused God's command to go to Nineveh, he was swallowed by a whale. The mythologist Joseph Campbell wrote of the dual nature of the Buddha:

> In Buddhist systems, more especially those of Tibet, the meditation Buddhas appear in two aspects, one peaceful and the other wrathful. If you are clinging fiercely to your ego and its little temporal world of sorrows and joys, hanging on for dear life, it will be the wrathful aspect of the deity that appears. It will seem terrifying. But the moment your ego yields and gives up, that same meditation Buddha is experienced as a bestower of bliss.[14]

When our waking personality is not in alignment with our center, the Self may appear as dark, dangerous, or even destructive. We may find plans failing and life energy faltering. When we persist on an ego-driven, error-ridden path, the Self tries to realign us by orchestrating a spectacular failure—the kind later referred to as a wake-up call. It also sends fearsome dreams as warning.

The Self in its dark aspect can show up as a pitiless force. Dreams may feature images of war, imprisonment, nuclear holocaust, tornadoes, attacking animals, earthquakes, tidal waves, monsters, and ghosts—and this is only a partial list. Relating to the Self may mean wrestling a personal portion of primal darkness into consciousness, especially if there has been

trauma. Only when we bow to the greater intelligence within can we come into right relationship with ourselves and the world. Dreams are in the service of wholeness, whether adjusting our direction or jolting us into course correction.

> Every dream, if it is really understood, not only with the intellect but really emotionally understood, has such a shot-like "Aha" effect upon one. If you do not have that then you have not understood the dream yet. . . . Every understood dream is like a slight electric shock into higher consciousness.
>
> —Marie-Louise von Franz

A man approaching sixty had been chronically underemployed but clung to an improbable dream of magical success. He dreamed:

Pitiless Raptor

I'm walking and carrying something heavy. Somehow this is something I have to do—almost like a forced march with other people. My burden is on my back, so I am looking down and everything is dreary and dark. We are walking through a forest, and I can only see the dark road at my feet and walls of dark trees on each side. Then it occurs to me to look up. I throw my head back and see the sky, bright blue. I see the brilliant green of the treetops. I am stunned by how alive the world is. There is an enormous, majestic bird soaring overhead. I am overcome with an awareness of its beauty. While I am marveling at the splendor of this bird, it suddenly dives and catches a songbird in its talons, sending feathers flying. I feel heartsick to see the cruelty of the bird.

At the beginning of the dream, the burdened dream ego trudges along a dark and dreary path and lacks a broader perspective. Because success had eluded him, life felt like a forced march from one oppressive obligation to the next. When he looks up, he experiences the splendor of the Self but is unprepared for its ruthless side—the killing of the songbird. The dreamer

felt entitled to easy success and adhered to a new-age philosophy of manifesting desired goals through positive thinking, a means of disguising ego desires as psychic reality. When things did not work out, he raged against "the universe" for betraying him. He couldn't see that meaning might arise from a source greater than his conscious perceptions and wishes. This dream alerted the dreamer to a wondrous, transpersonal force in the psyche that does not exist to fulfill the ego's narrow agenda and can appear cruel in service to the demands of individuation.

Manifestations of the dark side of the Self remind us of nature's awesome, indiscriminate, destructive power. We must surrender our ego attitude and submit to the will of the Self, even when it appears frightening or destructive. The Self can sweep away the life we have established, readying us for something new. A man in his forties had the following dream:

The White Bison

I was in a courtyard and found a group of people gathered around the head of a white bison. The head looked like a statue with eyes closed. It was so big that one man from the group had to climb up to stand on it. He had a big knife (or a small sword) and started pushing it into the head. While everyone was cheering, I thought it was wrong, but I remained silent. Suddenly the head came to life, the bison opened its eyes, a growl was heard, and the earth shook. I realized that it was not just the head the man was messing with but that the whole bison was buried under the surface. The bison came out of the ground growling. His power and fury were overwhelming. I felt paralyzing fear and thought that this is the moment when I will die, and then I woke up.

To the Lakota, the white buffalo calf is the most sacred living thing on earth. According to the story, there was once a great famine, and two men were sent to find the buffalo that could sustain the tribe. While walking, they saw a woman of extraordinary beauty coming toward them. One man wanted to make her his wife, but the second man warned that she was holy. The first man didn't listen and became a pile of bones. The woman taught the Lakota how to pray and brought back the herds of life-sustaining

buffalo. Before she left, she transformed into a white buffalo calf. The white bison, therefore, is an image of the divine that demands we recognize and relate to it with reverence. If the ego tries to appropriate its energy for its own ends, it can be destructive.

The dreamer had been struggling with a painful creative block. He was full of ideas for a novel but couldn't get started. The dream shows that the tremendous power of the unconscious has been devalued and misused, and therefore the dream ego meets its negative aspect. *When* the shadow figure with the knife and the crowd disrespect transcendent reality, *then* the deadly power of the Self is awakened. The dreamer had just begun to discover his spirituality—the head of the white bison is visible, but the rest of it remains buried. The dream suggests that accessing creative and psychospiritual potential is not solely an ego-oriented endeavor.

Key: The Self may appear in a dark and frightening form.

The Self can show up as pitiless and annihilating. Such dreams can be frightening or upsetting.

- How might the Self image be confronting your ego attitude?
- Is the dream addressing an attitude, impasse, or quandary in your waking life?
- Is the dream asking for recognition of or reverence toward that transpersonal center of the psyche?
- How might the dream be trying to correct a psychic imbalance?

The Self Implied: Images of Wholeness and Becoming

Sometimes the Self appears in images that highlight its ordering, centering function. Images that feature roundness or constructs of four are often glimmers of the Self. Such images convey the harmonious interaction of forms created by consciousness, especially square shapes, and the

unconscious, especially circularity. These images can have a powerful impact. They reveal the action of the Self and the numinosity of wholeness.

In 1927, Jung had a dream that showed him what he would later come to call the Self:

> I found myself in a dirty, sooty city. It was night, and winter, and dark, and raining. I was in Liverpool. With a number of Swiss—say, half a dozen—I walked through the dark streets. I had the feeling that there we were coming from the harbor, and that the real city was actually up above, on the cliffs. We climbed up there. It reminded me of Basel, where the market is down below and then you go up through the Totengasschen ("Alley of the Dead"), which leads to a plateau above and so to the Petersplatz and the Peterskirche. When we reached the plateau, we found a broad square dimly illuminated by street lights, into which many streets converged. The various quarters of the city were arranged radially around the square. In the center was a round pool, and in the middle of it a small island. While everything round about was obscured by rain, fog, smoke, and dimly lit darkness, the little island blazed with sunlight. On it stood a single tree, a magnolia, in a shower of reddish blossoms. It was as though the tree stood in the sunlight and were at the same time the source of light. My companions commented on the abominable weather, and obviously did not see the tree. They spoke of another Swiss who was living in Liverpool, and expressed surprise that he should have settled here. I was carried away by the beauty of the flowering tree and the sunlit island, and thought, "I know very well why he has settled here."[15]

In his memoir *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung writes about how he understood this dream's impact:

> This dream represented my situation at the time. I can still see the grayish-yellow raincoats, glistening with the wetness of the rain. Everything was extremely unpleasant, black, and opaque—just as I felt then. But I had had a vision of unearthly beauty, and that was why I was able to live at all. Liverpool is the "pool of life." The "liver,"

according to an old view, is the seat of life—that which "makes to live."

This dream brought with it a sense of finality. I saw that here the goal had been revealed. One could not go beyond the center. The center is the goal, and everything is directed toward that center. Through this dream I understood that the self is the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning. Therein lies its healing function.[16]

Jung had been granted a vision of the guiding center. A woman in midlife had a dream suggestive of the Self:

Round House

A dad was building a round house for his daughter. It felt like home to me, very safe. There would be four floors. There was an old tree in the center. It was a property in the middle of a neighborhood but hidden behind and beneath trees. The house spun around slowly, and I didn't know if I would like that feature. I was in the house. It was bare because it was still being built. It didn't feel like it was my house, but I wanted it to be.

Just as in Jung's dream, there is an image of a tree at the center; roots reach down and branches stretch upward. This dream shows a potential for wholeness. The round home provides safety, although the dream ego is initially ambivalent about the 360-degree perspective this rotating house offers. The dreamer had a close relationship with her father, and the magical house implies that she experiences her personal father as a mediator to the energies of the Self in its benevolent aspect. The house is still under construction, and the dream ego is a bit ambivalent, but the direction of the dream suggests a future move-in date. This dream brought a sense of wonder and possibility.

A woman in her sixties had a dream that recurred for decades that always brought a deep sense of joy:

Spiral Pathway

I have a recurring dream of walking up a hill toward a little stone house overgrown with vines. I am overcome with a deep sense of happiness, a sense of coming home. I know as I start up the hill that I will find an open door, and inside the interior will be a flood of golden light from leaded windows. My steps quicken. The room is exactly as I expect it to be. A wooden staircase is on the right, leading to a second story unseen from the outside. To the left is an archway leading into another room with gleaming wooden floors. Beyond that, another arch leading deeper into the interior. I walk from room to room following a path that spirals as if I am walking through the coils of a shell. The deeper I go, the more sacred the space becomes. Sometimes there are other people with me; other times I am alone. As I reach the center of the shell, I find a circular room, the most sacred spot of all. I have to squeeze through the coils to get inside. The walls have turned to stone, and a light comes from all angles despite the tight space. I reach another door and inside there is an altar, a black stone slab on which lies a petrified deer antler, a strange rock, and some curious silver statues, curled forms, neither male nor female. I sense a presence I can almost see, then I wake up.

The dream maker offers a vision of an abiding inner structure, a dwelling that follows a spiraling path toward the center, where she finds herself in the presence of the mystery. The dream asserts the existence of a sacred dimension to life and a promise of homecoming.

Key: The Self may manifest in dreams in images of the center or of wholeness.

- The Self may be implied in dreams by images of wholeness.
- Does your dream contain circles, spheres, rings, trees, eggs, gold, cities, or similar images? These can all signify the Self.
- Does your dream have profound emotional power? Self images in dreams are frequently numinous.

- Is there an image in your dream that offers comfort or encouragement?
- Why might this image be appearing now?

Our relationship with the Self is much less likely to arrive in a monumental, soul-shaking way than it is incrementally, night after night in dreams. The Self can also manifest in dreams during times of crisis and transition to offer comfort, healing, and grace. Such images ask less for interpretation and intellect than recognition and inclusion in consciousness. On the other hand, darkly powerful dreams need to be wrestled into meaning. Everyone dedicated to understanding dreams and the inner life undertakes a quest within, for the Self oversees the unfolding of the personality—the process of individuation that is at the core of Jungian theory and practice.

In his memoir *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung wrote, "The decisive question for man is: Is he related to something infinite or not? That is the telling question of his life. Only if we know that the thing which truly matters is the infinite can we avoid fixing our interest upon futilities, and upon all kinds of goals which are not of real importance."[17] While the discovery that the ego's perspective is subordinate to a greater whole dethrones its assumption of independence, experiences of the Self also relieve the ego of its existential burden: feeling alone in a vast cosmos facing the threat of nonbeing that is death. We belong. We have a home in the universe and are part of a greater whole.

11

Active Imagination

Dreaming the Dream On

When you observe the world, you see people, you see houses, you see the sky, you see tangible objects. But when you observe yourself within, you see moving images, a world of images, generally known as fantasies. Yet these fantasies are facts.

—C. G. Jung

If dreams are a communication from the Self, what if we could continue the conversation? Jung's discovery of active imagination allows us to interact with the unconscious by engaging dream figures and situations. Jung believed that active imagination was one of the most powerful techniques available to anyone desiring psychological growth. "This process of coming to terms with the Other in us is well worth while, because in this way we get to know aspects of our nature which we would not allow anybody else to show us and which we ourselves would never have admitted."[1]

If dreaming is like scuba diving, active imagination is like snorkeling. Rather than descending all the way into the depths, we remain on the surface and submerge our faces to see the underwater world, allowing us to perceive what is below illuminated by the sunlight of consciousness. This allows us to engage with dream figures with clarity and focus. In dreams, consciousness is the passive recipient of messages from the unconscious. In active imagination, consciousness goes into the inner world, invites the unconscious to speak, and interacts with it. The "dreaming while awake" experience of active imagination has a surprisingly vivid quality. It allows us to bring dreams into the waking world as lived experiences.

Here are Jung's simple instructions for active imagination in a letter to "Mr. O":

> The point is that you start with any image, for instance just with that yellow mass in your dream. Contemplate it and carefully observe how the picture begins to unfold or to change. Don't try to make it into something, just do nothing but observe what its spontaneous changes are. Any mental picture you contemplate in this way will sooner or later change through a spontaneous association that causes a slight alteration of the picture. You must carefully avoid impatient jumping from one subject to another. Hold fast to the one image you have chosen and wait until it changes by itself. Note all these changes and eventually step into the picture yourself, and if it is a speaking figure at all then say what you have to say to that figure and listen to what he or she has to say . . . Therewith you gradually create the unity of conscious and unconscious without which there is no individuation at all.[2]

This astonishing paragraph inspired Deb to try active imagination for the first time:

> I sat down, and the image of a small, shaded pool where watercress grew sprang to mind. The pool was now eight or ten feet in diameter, with the cress growing thickly around the edges, shaded by leafy overhead branches. It could have been an illustration for a book of fairy tales. I stood at the water's edge, and suddenly two bright red eyes gleamed up at me from the upper right quadrant of the pool, just in front of the watercress. Suddenly I saw the gestalt: the pool was a face, with curly cress locks and two eyes, which then blinked shut, as the frog to whom they belonged dived beneath the surface of the water. I knelt down and found myself brushing the locks from the water maiden's face as a mother would brush hair from the face of her sleeping child. And then I simply leaned into the pool and found myself swimming underwater behind the brilliantly green frog with jewel-red eyes. My vision went on to an encounter that was alive and surprising and real—and just as I was about to engage with the inner figure that appeared, I was popped back into the "real" world as suddenly as I had left it. I was stunned by what happened.

Deb's encounter with the water maiden and frog illustrates the autonomy of the unconscious. We do not control the process any more than we do our nightly dreams. Anything can serve as a starting point for active imagination—an image from a story or painting, a hexagram from the I Ching, a tarot card, a bad mood, or a physical sensation in the body. Choosing to work with an image from a dream can amplify and clarify a dream's message, as Joseph learned in his twenties.

Joseph was working to establish himself as an Alexander Technique teacher. He was diffident about marketing and billing and was barely making enough money to cover his expenses. He had a terrifying dream that recurred with increasing frequency until it became a dreaded nightly occurrence:

Shooting the Intruder

I'm in my bed and am awakened by the sound of an intruder. I reach into my nightstand and take out a pistol. When I look into the hall, I see a menacing man coming up the stairs. When he gets to the top, I shoot him, and he falls.

Disturbed, Joseph mentioned his dream to a Jungian analyst friend, who suggested he try active imagination. Joseph reentered the dream in his imagination, "playing" it from the beginning. This time, when the intruder got to the top of the stairs, Joseph said, "What are you here to teach me?"

"I'm so glad you asked!" answered the intruder. He invited Joseph to go for a walk and told him that he was going about his business the wrong way. "You must take from life what you need," the intruder-turned-guide told him. Active imagination unlocked the dream's message. Immediately the recurring dream ceased. Joseph began keeping better financial records and sending regular mailings to potential clients. Within a year his income had doubled. Encounters in active imagination are like psychic batteries: they have energy that can charge our waking personality with life force. Active imagination helped Joseph move his outer life forward.

Not all active imagination experiences have such dramatic results. Sometimes its value is helping us sink more deeply into the feelings in a dream. Consider this dream of a fifty-four-year-old woman:

Dolphin Pool

I'm in a hotel and there is a pool or aquarium with a dolphin in it. I spend time with the dolphin. It is affectionate and attached to me. The hotel people explain that they can move the dolphin into a pool where I can be in the water with him. I am excited about this and ask them to do it. They do, but instead of a round, beautiful pool the size of a large room, they put him in a pool that is just a bit bigger than a bathtub. It still seems fine, mostly. I sit on the side with my legs in the water. The dolphin has his head in my lap. At one point, he nurses from my breast. We spend time like that for a while. I think about how much I love animals. The hotel will move him back to his space. I get a bill for this. It is over $600.

Despite effort, interpretations never clicked, so the dreamer engaged in active imagination. She entered the dream, sat with her legs in a bathtub-size pool, and held the dolphin. She experienced a depth and range of feeling stronger than those in the dream: sorrow, love, pity, and acceptance. The gift of this woman's active imagination wasn't insight but experiencing a quality of relationship that invited a shift in the inner world.

Some people are reluctant to try active imagination. What if engaging the unconscious invites inundation by a psychic tsunami? If active imagination calls to you but you are concerned about being overwhelmed, what would help you feel supported and safe? Perhaps a friend could be close by to intervene if needed or tap you on the shoulder after an agreed length of time. Generally, the unconscious is allied with your growth and development. So-called negative images and feelings are potentials for conscious use, and the psyche does not tend to give us more than we are ready to assimilate.

People also doubt that active imagination will "work." What if you lack sufficient juice to pass Psychic Aptitude 101? Know that you have a reservoir of unconscious life; accessing it is a matter of intention and practice. Active imagination is not an assignment but an invitation to play—seriously but not solemnly, as children do. Even if you "make something up" or fall asleep, you'll have engaged with yourself. Whatever happens belongs to you and enhances your life. There is no right way to play.

You have already tapped into active imagination by reading this book. Recording and working with your dreams is itself a kind of active imagination. Paying attention to dreams signals to the dream maker that you are listening and helps you establish a deeper relationship with it. When you direct conscious attention to the unconscious, it responds. You are creating the living relationship to psyche within which meaning develops.

> I was once told that it wasn't important if I understood my dreams. What was important was that the dreams understood me. My attitude toward my dreams would determine their attitude toward me. It's a living dialogue. When we listen to dreams, we change, and when dreams are heard, they change.
>
> —Marie-Louise von Franz

If you want to deepen your connection to your dreams through active imagination, here are some tips. As with Jung's letter to "Mr. O," the focus you select need not be big, but it should be something you are genuinely curious about. It's okay to be ambivalent, just as you might be about meeting a stranger. Just be sure to offer basic goodwill and openness. The face that we turn toward the unconscious tends to be the face it turns to us.

Key: Engage your dreams in waking life through active imagination.

Follow the steps below to engage in active imagination.

- Find a time and place where you will not be disturbed. Turn off your phone, lock the door, or go somewhere free of interruptions. You will need at least half an hour.
- Engage in a small ritual. This helps separate your active imagination time from the rest of your day. It also signals receptiveness. You might light a candle, hold a special object, sit in a particular spot, or listen to a chant to invoke the unconscious.

- Center. This may involve closing your eyes and taking a few deep breaths. You might soften your gaze while looking at a certain image or engage in a visualization such as taking an escalator into the depths as you slow your breathing and focus inward.
- Call to mind the dream or other image you wish to engage and hold that image in your mind until it begins to move of its own accord. If your attention wanders, gently bring it back to the image.
- Address your comments or questions to the dream character. *What are you here to teach me?* is a good general question to ask.
- Listen for the response. Simply receive what comes up. There is no need for logic, objection, or doubt—you can do that later! Continue the dialogue until it feels done.
- Record your experience and reflections in your dream journal.

Other Active Imagination Techniques

Active imagination can be extended into a variety of practices that increase embodied awareness and conscious connection to dream imagery and feeling. Here are some additional possibilities for courting the unconscious.

Paint, Create, Make

Jung was going through a time of intense turmoil and chose to let himself "plummet down" into the unconscious. In his imagination, he encountered Philemon, a figure from his dreams. He described these experiences in his Red Book and later wrote about them in his autobiography:

> There was a blue sky. . . [and] there appeared from the right a winged being. . . . I saw that it was an old man with the horns of a bull. He held a bunch of four keys, one of which he clutched as if he were about to open a lock. He had the wings of a kingfisher with its characteristic colors.
>
> Since I did not understand this dream-image, I painted it in order to impress it upon my memory. . . .

> Philemon and other figures of my fantasies brought home to me the crucial insight that there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life. Philemon represented a force which was not myself. In my fantasies I held conversations with him, and he said things which I had not consciously thought. For I observed clearly that it was he who spoke, not I.[3]

Jung used hand and eye to bring the astonishing image alive. Philemon with his kingfisher wings is now an iconic Jungian image, and Philemon became a figure with whom Jung interacted many times as they walked together in Jung's yard. You don't need to be as artistically talented as Jung to paint or draw your dreams! It doesn't matter if your drawing looks rudimentary. Try to access the childlike pleasure of creating and trust the unconscious as your partner.

Key: Paint, draw, or sculpt your dream.

- Use whatever materials you have on hand to create an artistic representation of your dream.
- Allow yourself to play. Enjoy the process.
- Don't worry about the artistic merit of your creation. You are creating a deepened connection with the unconscious by engaging it in this manner.

Let the Body Speak

The body is a source of wordless, instinctual wisdom, just like our dreams. Physically enacting dream scenes can engage somatic knowing and open up a dream's meaning. Joseph was working with a successful middle-aged woman who told him a dream fragment: she was walking in her childhood home, crossing the balcony above the living room. This dream doesn't sound at all extraordinary, but because Joseph had been an Alexander Technique teacher, he was keenly aware of how the body can store information and memory. He asked the dreamer to demonstrate how she

walked on the balcony. As the woman walked back and forth across his office, Joseph noticed that she was walking on the balls of her feet like a ballerina, stepping forward, touching her toes, and rolling back to her heels in a stylized manner. When he remarked that it looked as though she were walking so as to not make any noise, she sat on the floor and wept. She recalled that when she was a teen her father became obsessed with her walking and would shout that she clomped like a horse, so she contrived to walk soundlessly. As she explored her wounding experience with her father, she began walking more naturally. Her new stride helped relieve chronic hip pain. The body often holds onto secrets and speaks to us about them.

Key: Embody your dream.

- Use motion and gesture to embody your dream. Move as you did in the dream, perhaps even exaggerating certain gestures.
- Note any subtle sensations or emotions that emerge.
- Journal about your experience afterward.

A Symbolic Gesture

Sometimes we have a dream that offers an image like a beacon, a symbol that eloquently captures a solution to a current conflict or encompasses a value toward which we are striving. Allowing this image to become important for us can be a way of honoring the dream maker's wisdom. You might draw the image, buy a version of the image, or take a symbolic action that communicates to the dream maker that you heard its message and are taking it seriously. For example, a forty-two-year-old-woman had the following dream:

Lipstick

I am back in college. I have written a long and very carefully worded letter to the school authorities asking whether it might be okay to wear lipstick.

The dreamer was in fact quite modest and never wore makeup. She felt conflicted about drawing attention to herself. On the one hand, she longed to be seen and admired by others for her talents—and she was very talented. On the other hand, seeking attention felt profoundly forbidden, and she got anxious whenever she engaged in even healthy and appropriate self-promotion. She saw that this dream elegantly expressed a truth about a central conflict. To honor the dream and allow its message to have an even greater impact on her psyche, she made a point of going to a local store and taking the time to select a lipstick, which she then bought. In effect, she gave herself the permission that her dream ego had been seeking from "the authorities." It's important to note that buying the lipstick wasn't concretizing the message of the dream. Rather, it was a ritualized act that called upon the same symbolism offered by the dream maker.

> A dream that is not understood remains a mere occurrence; understood, it becomes a living experience.
>
> —C. G. Jung

A young man had a striking dream that succinctly summarized a central issue and suggested the required change in attitude. The dreamer was a performer who lost his job during the pandemic. He subjected himself to harsh criticisms about the need to "grow up" and get a "real job." Then he had this dream:

Koi

I was at a wealthy older male relative's house. It felt post-apocalyptic. We had no food, and a female relative told me that I had to reach into a koi pond and kill a koi so we could eat it and survive. I didn't want to do this, but I did. I felt guilty and uneasy about it. The feeling of reaching into the water and killing this thing with my hands was very realistic and visceral. I could feel my nails digging into its flesh and its blood. I brought it into my relative's house, and as soon as I did, it became a bleeding, dying puppy.

Koi are known for their intelligence, connection with their owners, and above all, their mystical, jewellike beauty. They are important symbols in Chinese and Japanese culture of abundance and good fortune and are not considered sources of food. Cultivated for their beauty alone, nothing else is required of them. The dream maker was alerting him that, by focusing solely on practical concerns, he was sacrificing a sensitive, artistic part of himself in the interest of meeting externally imposed demands. The dreamer had a special affinity with dogs, so that the heartbreaking image of the dying puppy served to drive the message home. The dream image of the koi became an important reminder of what he valued and needed to prioritize. To mark the significance of this dream, the dreamer chose to have a beautiful image of a koi tattooed on his arm. Getting the tattoo was a symbolic gesture that honored the dream maker's message.

Key: Create a ritual in your waking life to honor the dream.

- Does the dream invite you to take any action? What can you *do* with this dream?
- How can you honor the dream?
- Is there a symbolic gesture you can make in your waking life?

Taking on a New Perspective

Dreams often feature non-I elements that oppose or challenge the dream ego, whose perspective is usually aligned with that of our waking consciousness. Jungian analyst Robert Bosnak once had a lucid dream that showed just how "other" dream figures can be. In confronting a recalcitrant dream cab driver, Bosnak's frustrated dream ego finally shouted, "You are part of my dream!" The cabbie looked at him incredulously and drove off. He would not put up with the dream ego's entitled presumption of authority! This dream experience impressed Bosnak with the autonomy of the psyche, including the selfhood of people who inhabit our dreams.[4]

The denizens of our dreams have a perspective independent of consciousness. Just as we might misunderstand the intentions, thoughts, or

views of another person, we are likely to do so with dream figures. In the world of dreams, they are as real as we, and we can be as curious and respectful of them as we might be about any unknown person. We can also try to see things through their eyes. The breakthrough Joseph experienced in his active imagination with the intruder is a dramatic example of how being aligned with your dream ego obscures the essential meaning of the dream. Your dream ego's reaction, like that of the waking ego, is that an intruder coming up the stairs is menacing, and self-defense is necessary. But in the dream world, we can become curious about the viewpoint of the others within.

The practice of active imagination typically involves a dialogue between consciousness and the unconscious. We can also use our imagination to "visit" the perspective of a dream inhabitant. If you feel annoyed, challenged, or drawn to a particular dream figure, that can be an invitation to see things as if you were that person. Imagine that you are an actor who has been cast in that role. Reenter the dream in your imagination and experience the dream narrative as that dream figure.

This exercise takes little time and can yield striking results, as it did for a woman in her midthirties who had the following dream:

Critique

I'm standing in front of the class giving a presentation. Cass is in the front row, and she is loudly criticizing me.

The dreamer had gone to high school with Cass and remembered her as someone she had looked up to and admired. In waking life, Cass had been a kind and supportive friend, so her role in this dream seemed like a betrayal and the dreamer was at first upset. When the dreamer cast herself in the role of Cass and replayed the dream, she was startled to realize Cass ardently wanted the dream ego to be truer to herself. "Oh," the dreamer realized, "she's trying to goad me into doing better!" The dreamer then understood that the dream was speaking to a current life issue: she was forgoing her authentic stance for fear of being criticized.

If this exercise seems like it could feel overwhelming, you might wait and try it with a therapist or use another method. This approach is probably

not right for dreams that elicit highly distressing emotions, for example.

Key: Experience the dream through the perspective of a non-ego dream figure.

- Relax. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Call to mind a recent dream featuring a character with whom you would like to engage.
- Reenter the dream as if it is a movie that you can start from the beginning. This time, instead of being "you" in the dream, experience the action as if you were the other character. Inhabit that perspective as fully as possible.
- Notice what it feels like to be the other person (or animal). What do you see? What are you wearing? What are you feeling and thinking? How do you experience your interactions with your dream ego?
- When you're done, write down this character's "side of the story" and your reflections.

You can intensify this practice by using your body in the two-chair Gestalt technique. A woman in graduate school had this dream:

Wolves

I am in a huge house somewhere in the country. A number of students and teachers are there to do fieldwork. I am in the kitchen, cooking for our communal meal. Outside the kitchen door I see two wolves. One of them is standing on its hind legs with its front legs up against the door. I open the door and one of the wolves turns to look at me—it has the face of a young woman.

The dreamer reported shock and pity at seeing the human face of the shaggy wolf. She set up two chairs and began by sitting in the "me" chair (feeling self-conscious and awkward). She asked, "Who are you and what do you want?" Then she moved to the other chair, imagined she was the

"wolf woman," and said, "This is my land. I deserve to be here." The dreamer's horror turned to awe as continued dialogue revealed the wolf woman's pride in being able to live on the land in a natural manner, and the dreamer became aware that her initial pity had been condescending. After the exercise, the dreamer realized that cooking for the group was a service she performed because she didn't feel—in the dream or her graduate program—that she belonged. She often volunteered to be helpful to "earn" her place.

Key: Use the two-chair technique.

- Set up two chairs facing each other.
- Sit in the "me" chair and speak a thought, feeling, or question to the dream figure. Feel free to use gesture and other forms of physical expression.
- Move to the dream character chair and speak from his or her perspective. Let yourself say whatever comes up, again using any gestures that naturally arise.
- Move back and forth between the chairs, letting those two parts of yourself have it out with each other. Physical movement helps to distinguish the dream characters, and body language enhances their viewpoints—which depict the dreamer's inner conflict. It leads to a newly felt "knowing" as voice, emotion, and body come into consciousness more fully.

Both of these techniques involve allowing the imagination to fill in something that wasn't explicit in the dream. Whenever there is information missing, we can ask ourselves, *What does my imagination tell me about this?* While you may fear imposing your ego perspective on a dream, when you dip into imagination, you are drinking from the same stream from which the dream arose. When we settle into the mood of the dream and allow ourselves to inhabit the non-ego other, we drop into the imaginal field belonging to the dream. Anything that we draw up, therefore, is of the dream in some fashion.

Write It Down

A dream journal is a psychic bank account in which "deposits" accrue spiritual, emotional, and cognitive interest. Similar to the previous two-chair exercise, you can write dialogue between your dream ego and a dream figure. Try using your nondominant hand to write the answers from the unconscious, or writing as rapidly as possible to override ego's self-critique. The goal, as ever, is to allow the unconscious to express itself. Experiment to see what works for you.

In transcribing a dream, you have done some of this already—you have changed your dream to a dream text. People often ask about the best process for transcribing dreams—should they include associations, memories, or vague details? Yes. As you begin writing, unexpected ideas tend to arise. Put it all down, from the house that felt like it might have been painted pink to the squirrel that seemed like he had a mean look in his eye. You can reflect on everything later as you move into a more objective effort to understand.

Key: Journal your way into the imaginal realm.

Here is a list of possibilities to use writing as a door into the imaginal world:

- With your dominant hand, write down questions or reactions addressed to a non-ego dream figure. Transfer the pen to your nondominant hand and wait for the reply.
- Draw a vertical line down the center of a piece of paper. Use one side for the ego, or "me" part of the dialogue, and the other side for the dream figure's voice.
- Read your dialogue aloud to involve voice and body.
- Write as rapidly as possible without allowing your hand to stop moving even if you have to write nonsense or "I don't know what to write." The eye-hand-brain connection is powerful and something will inevitably come up.

Prequel and Sequel

You can also extend a dream into a "before" and "after," like movies that generate prequels and sequels. Sometimes the dream curtain comes up on a scene already in motion, as if you arrived late to the play and missed the beginning. Letting your imagination tell you what happened before the dream began can add levels of meaning.

Consider the following dream of a fifty-three-year-old woman:

Rescued Octopus

I have rescued an octopus and am keeping it moist in a bag of water. This highly intelligent creature is being kept in a tiny space where it can't even move. I am talking to it and stroking it. At one point, it sticks out one of its tentacles. It looks like an elephant's trunk. I determine that I will create an indoor pool for it or at least get a proper aquarium. I may have rescued this creature but I'm not really doing right by it.

In trying to understand the dream maker's message, the dreamer found that it mattered to have some sense of what preceded the action shown in the dream. What had she rescued the octopus from? Where was it, and in what kind of state had she found it? How had it gotten there? She allowed her imagination to speak, and she saw the octopus splayed on a concrete floor, still, weak, and far from any water that might be its home. Though this information wasn't contained in the dream itself, this imaginal prequel allowed her to deepen her engagement with the image.

Similarly, we can "dream the dream on," as Jung said. We can imagine different endings to a dream or continue a dream into a new chapter. With the octopus dream, we might imagine taking the octopus down to the beach and gently placing it in the water or bringing it to a local aquarium that is equipped to care for such animals. One of these or another imagined endings is likely to spark a felt insight into how and why such action was absent in the dream. If, as often happens, a dream lacks an ending, you can provide one, or imagine what happens next.

Key: Consult your imagination to find out what happened before or after a certain dream image.

If your dream opens with a puzzling image or ends on a cliff-hanger, consider using prequel or sequel to explore what might have happened before or will happen after.

- How did this initial situation arise?
- What happened right before the curtain rose on the dream to create the opening situation?
- For a cliff-hanger ending, what does your imagination tell you about what will happen next?

Journaling Prompt

Write a brief history of what happened in a dream figure's life prior to appearing in your dream—or what has happened to the dream figure since the dream.

Every night, our dream maker issues us an invitation to play. It conjures strange, unexpected situations and juxtaposes contradictory images. It wants to be understood, engaged, and valued. At times, our efforts to interpret a dream will be frustrated, yet the opportunity to *experience* a dream more deeply will always be available to us through the techniques of active imagination.

12

Working with a Dream

Using the Keys

One would do well to treat every dream as though it were a totally unknown object. Look at it from all sides, take it in your hand, carry it about with you, let your imagination play round it, and talk about it with other people.

—C. G. Jung

In the preceding pages, we've explored ways to unlock the doors to your dreams. Now let's try using our keys, one by one, to open the door to a dream. We've chosen a dream that will benefit from applying many of the techniques we've discussed. We're going to work through it key by key so you can see how multiple perspectives fit together, building to interpretive wholeness. This dream belongs to a woman in her forties who worked as a goldsmith. She was contemplating a geographic move and career change after a period of healing from an abusive relationship. She was newly open to dating again.

Dogs of War

I'm in a subterranean space filled with ancient dusty things. I'm with a man. I don't know him, but I'm okay with him being there. We find a baby girl all swaddled up. I pick her up in the darkness and hold her to my chest. We head for the tunnel to get out. The man I'm with raises his torch and illuminates the ceiling of the cavern. He points out that the ceiling has been burned, saying, "You can't trust a man whose ceiling has been burnt." I see movement in the darkness. Something is following us. He emerges from the darkness. He is so inky black it is as if he is made from the darkness. He is tall, well muscled, and covered in what looks like black rubber or body armor. His hair looks like dreadlocks or maybe tentacles, or maybe it isn't hair but a helmet or headdress. But his eyes

are human and a deep blue. His face is finely carved. He is arresting. I wondered if he was an ancient god, or an alien. He moves toward me, “Give her to me. I’m here to protect her.” I gasp and back away from him, clutching the baby tighter to my chest. The man I am with pulls me into the tunnel and away from the dark man. We run. The man lights the tunnel on fire, pouring kerosene and tossing his torch into the mouth of the cave after exiting. We walk away into the night. I look back and see the dark man’s movement in the flames. Suddenly the man, child, and I are in an antique store. It is crowded and dusty. It hasn’t been open to the public in years. The man says, “The shop was my father’s.” The child is larger now. Her legs are wrapped around my waist as I hold her. The man asks me, “Where do you think the dark man is? Will he find us?” As he asks this, I feel the dark man’s hard chest muscles press against my back. Suddenly there is chaos. Fire and the breaking of glass. Parts of the roof are collapsing and raining down upon us, but the dark man is shielding us from the torrent. Suddenly we are in the alley behind the shop. The child has grown again. She is an adolescent and is holding my hand. The dark man is standing a few feet away, blending into the darkness. I don’t know where the other man is. The girl squeezes my hand. “You don’t need to protect me from him,” she says to me. I look at him as he steps closer, reaching his hand out toward her. She looks at him and smiles as she takes his hand, still holding me with her other hand. “He and I are the same,” she says. “We are the dogs of war.”

Before diving into the associative richness of this dream, note your **feeling** reaction. Mythological imagery, compelling narrative, and emotional impact make it a dream full of archetypal import. Such dreams often occur at significant crossroads or major life transitions.

Right away, we see that this dream is commenting on things in the **inner world**—the figures in the dream are all unknown to the dreamer in waking life so there will be few **personal associations**. **Subjective interpretation**, **explanation**, and **archetypal amplification** will be crucial for understanding this dream.

Let’s go through it step by step.

“I’m in a subterranean space filled with ancient dusty things.”

When the curtain on the inner play rises, we are underground. The **setting** evokes the underworld, typically **symbolizing** the unconscious. Because the place is filled with "ancient dusty things," the dream maker is drawing our attention to psychic material from the **past**. Applying the **real-life test**, we can ask ourselves what we would know if we found such a space in waking life. We might imagine that no one had been there for a long time. Perhaps secrets were stored here and then forgotten.

Now let's move to **archetypal amplification**. The subterranean scene recalls caves from myths and fairy tales that contain stashes of riches. In the Middle Eastern story "Aladdin," a young man is sent into a cave. He is instructed to pass rooms full of gold and silver without touching it; he is to take only a simple, tarnished lamp. The Hans Christian Andersen story "The Tinder Box" features a similar motif. A witch persuades a soldier to go into a subterranean space filled with gold and silver. She tells him to bring back as much money as he would like; the only thing she wants is a humble tinder box. In both stories, the simple item is the most valuable. The lamp, of course, is home to a wish-granting genie; the tinder box, when struck, conjures magical dogs ready to do the soldier's bidding. Perhaps there are unlikely treasures in this underground chamber as well.

"I'm with a man. I don't know him, but I'm okay with him being there.
We find a baby girl all swaddled up."

The exposition of the dream—**initial situation** and **setting**—is now complete: the dream ego and an unknown man are in a subterranean space and find a baby girl. We might hypothesize that the unknown man—not an image of someone from the dreamer's personal life—is a positive **animus** image, especially as "I'm okay with him being there."

A baby, "the child," is an archetypal **symbol** with many **amplifications** in myths, fairy tales, and religious imagery. Jung says,

> One of the essential features of the child motif is its futurity. The child is potential future. Hence the occurrence of the child motif in the psychology of the individual signifies as a rule an anticipation of future developments, even though at first sight it may seem like a retrospective configuration. Life is a flux, a flowing into the future,

> and not a stoppage or a backwash. It is therefore not surprising that so many of the mythological saviours are child gods. This agrees exactly with our experience of the psychology of the individual, which shows that the "child" paves the way for a future change of personality. In the individuation process, it anticipates the figure that comes from the synthesis of conscious and unconscious elements in the personality. It is therefore a symbol which unites the opposites; a mediator, a bringer of healing, that is, one who makes whole.[1]

Children in dreams bring **telos**—they represent **future** possibility and potential and can be images of the incarnating **Self**. The story of Moses **amplifies** this theme. Pharaoh had decreed the death of Israelite children, so Moses's mother placed him in a tiny boat and let it float down the Nile, where she knew Pharaoh's daughter was bathing. The princess adopted him, and Moses was raised in the royal court. The unmothered baby **symbolizes** the divine child whose destiny cannot be derailed. Like Moses, the dream baby was not rejected but protected.

Using **explanation**, we know that babies are new, helpless humans who need care and safekeeping. *Baby* is also used to describe other beginnings: we take baby steps into a new endeavor, and George babies his prize dahlias. Similarly, when a new attitude is born in the psyche, its infancy is precious and requires tending. New life begins in the dark, below consciousness, often **symbolized** by the womb, a cave, or the ocean's depths.

> "I pick her up in the darkness and hold her to my chest. We head for the tunnel to get out."

The **dream ego** immediately claims and embraces the baby. It has **moved toward** new life and potential without hesitation—a seemingly positive development. On the other hand, **amplification** tells us that abducting numinous potential from the underground—the unconscious—comes at a price. In the myth of Psyche and Eros, Psyche's final mission into the underworld to retrieve Persephone's beauty box was perilous. Psyche succumbed to a deathlike sleep because of her transgression before being reunited with her lover.

Since the dream ego and the baby are both female, the baby may be a young, undeveloped aspect of the dreamer's **shadow**. What part of her has been rejected and relegated to the underworld? Could the dream baby also be a reference to the dreamer's **past**? Perhaps a part of her soul has long been sequestered. Alternatively, perhaps the baby represents a new potential that has been germinating in the dreamer's psyche and has only recently been "born." There are many possibilities to consider with this potent symbol.

> "The man I'm with raises his torch and illuminates the ceiling of the cavern. He points out that the ceiling has been burned, saying, 'You can't trust a man whose ceiling has been burnt.'"

The **dramatic structure** of this dream is clear, and the plot is developing; there are twists and turns as the **action** develops. The dream ego has seized the baby, the **animus** illuminates the cavern, and the trio is bent on escape. The **animus**, in the classic role of guide, is bringing the light of consciousness to a dark situation and showing the way forward. The enigmatic **dialogue** about the burned ceiling implies that the underground realm belongs to an untrustworthy man. It also contains the first reference to fire and burning in the dream, a motif that will be repeated.

A ceiling (**explanation**) is an upper limit. "I hit the ceiling" expresses anger, and to be "burned" is to be wronged. **Wordplay** can spark an "aha."

> "I see movement in the darkness. Something is following us. He emerges from the darkness. He is so inky black it is as if he is made from the darkness. He is tall, well muscled, and covered in what looks like black rubber or body armor. His hair looks like dreadlocks or maybe tentacles, or maybe it isn't hair but a helmet or headdress. But his eyes are human and a deep blue. His face is finely carved. He is arresting. I wondered if he was an ancient god, or an alien."

When the man with the torch speaks of distrusting a man with a burned ceiling, **then** the dark man appears. The **animus** has connected the dream ego with numinous, dark psychic content. The dark man's appearance creates **rising tension**. He resembles Hades, god of the underworld, inscrutable and unpredictable. Hades is an ancient and powerful god image

associated with terrifying subterranean forces (**amplification**). Humans could access land, sea, and sky, but they could not go to the underworld. In astrology, Pluto, another name for Hades, is often associated with unexpected violent eruptions of massive power and force.

Are the man with the torch and the dark man images of a split **animus**—a polarized inner masculine? Alternatively, could the dark man be associated with the transpersonal **Self** in its dark aspect? The otherworldly, awe-full feeling tone associated with him makes this plausible. The dreamer, not surprisingly, reported **feelings** of fear in this part of the dream. **Fear** in dreams often indicates content exiled from consciousness.

> "He moves toward me, [saying,] 'Give her to me. I'm here to protect her.' I gasp and back away from him, clutching the baby tighter to my chest."

We note that there are of four figures, two male and two female. Jung found quaternity **symbolic** of structural wholeness. The dream quaternity depicts an alignment of dream ego, shadow, and animus in conflict with deeper, darker archetypal realities. An image of **opposites** is also present. The dark man and the swaddled child both belong to this subterranean space somehow, and yet they are very different. The man with the torch and the dark man are also opposites.

The dream ego and her **animus** companion now **turn away from** the dark man; he epitomizes aspects of the psyche that the dream ego rejects. The dream ego **fears** the dark man and clutches the child away from him. Can we trust the **dream ego's attitude**? Is the dark man an enemy? **Dialogue** spoken by a non-ego element is often an accurate reflection of the stance of the unconscious, and the dark man states that he is there to protect the child. But the animus with the torch and the ego are aligned in wanting to escape. We will have to wait for the rest of the dream drama to unfold before we can evaluate whether the dream ego's initial **feelings of fear** about the dark man are warranted.

> "The man I am with pulls me into the tunnel and away from the dark man. We run. The man lights the tunnel on fire, pouring kerosene and tossing his torch into the mouth of the cave after exiting. We walk

away into the night. I look back and see the dark man's movement in the flames."

Dramatic tension rises. The **animus** figure urges the dream ego and the baby away and ignites the tunnel, a **repetition** and escalation of the fire motif (burned ceiling) that emphasizes the **animus** figure's opposition to the dark man. The **dream ego** now **turns against** the dark man as she aligns with the man with the torch to try to burn him. The dark man, however, survives the flames. **Archetypal amplification** takes us to the biblical book of Daniel: three Jewish officials who refused to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue were thrown into a fiery furnace. They—and a fourth man identified as the Son of God—walked unscathed in the flames. The dark man's survival **symbolizes** a psychic reality, an image of that which is eternal and incorruptible.

"Suddenly the man, child, and I are in an antique store. It is crowded and dusty. It hasn't been open to the public in years."

The antique store is both a sudden scene switch and a **repetition** of the original dream **setting**: things are old, dusty, and forsaken. **When** the dream ego, man, and child escape, **then** they wind up in the dusty, cluttered antique store. **When** you try to escape the conflict depicted in the opening scene, **then** you wind up in another version of the same situation. Although the dreamer's inner conflict cannot be resolved through opposition or escape, there has been development: antique shop wares are valued and visible (**explanation**), not stowed below ground, so repressed psychic material, although "[not] open to the public," is more accessible to consciousness. The new setting indicates that the same theme is being explored from a more conscious perspective, revealing a process of psychological development.

"The man says, 'The shop was my father's.' The child is larger now. Her legs are wrapped around my waist as I hold her."

The man makes an explicit connection between his role as **animus** and the **father complex**. We might wonder about the nature of the dreamer's inner father and how it relates to the dream's themes. Is the father related to

ancient but valuable attitudes or values? Now that the baby is above ground, she grows quickly. **When** the dream ego claims this inner child (**shadow**?) and brings it into the light of consciousness, **then** her development is rapid, emphasizing the dream's **telos**. The child who grows with preternatural speed is **archetypal**. We can **amplify** it with the myth of the Greek god Hermes, who made the first lyre and played music hours after his birth.

> "The man asks me, 'Where do you think the dark man is? Will he find us?' As he asks this, I feel the dark man's hard chest muscles press against my back. Suddenly there is chaos. Fire and the breaking of glass. Parts of the roof are collapsing and raining down upon us, but the dark man is shielding us from the torrent."

When we pay attention to the **dialogue** and its connection to action, we notice symmetry and **repetition**. The dark man first appeared after the man with the torch said, "You can't trust a man whose ceiling has been burnt." Now, the question about him again invokes his presence. The man with the torch is connected to the dark man: he precedes and summons him. **When** the dark man is mentioned, **then** he appears.

The man with the torch has been aligned with the dream ego—and now the dark man shows himself similarly aligned by protecting the dream ego and the girl. Again, a process of psychological growth reveals itself. The tension present at the beginning of the dream is moving toward resolution.

We have reached the **crisis**, the high point of tension in the **dramatic structure**. The first scene ended with the rush to escape and the fiery tunnel; now there is chaos, fire, and breaking glass. **When** there is contact with the dark man, **then** old structures are destroyed. The father's antique shop—the second psychic structure oriented to the **past**—cannot survive.

> "Suddenly we are in the alley behind the shop. The child has grown again. She is an adolescent and is holding my hand. The dark man is standing a few feet away, blending into the darkness. I don't know where the other man is."

The third scene begins with a new **setting**—outside, or in the "open." The **shadow/archetypal child** has grown into an adolescent. She now has

an independent stance but remains physically connected to the dream ego.

Another way to look at the child's miraculous growth is as a symbol of a long-term development over an extended period of time. Some dreams give a **sweeping overview** of our **past** while also pointing the way toward the **future**, and this may be one of those dreams. According to this understanding, we might imagine that the dream is picturing the dreamer's personal process over the past fourteen years or so and is commenting on the **past**. (We're roughly estimating the age of the teen.) What happened roughly fourteen years ago? What unfinished business might there be from adolescence?

The **animus** figure with the torch is no longer present. This may be because his function has been integrated. He seems to have fulfilled his role in effecting the escape from the underground and is no longer needed.

> "The girl squeezes my hand. 'You don't need to protect me from him,' she says to me. I look at him [the dark man] as he steps closer, reaching his hand out toward her. She looks at him and smiles as she takes his hand, still holding me with her other hand. 'He and I are the same,' she says. 'We are the dogs of war.'"

The theme of protection is **repeated**. When we pay attention to the **dialogue** in this dream, we notice another elegant symmetry. At the dream's outset, the dark man says, "I'm here to protect her." He next protects them from the antique shop's destruction. She now says, "You don't need to protect me from him."

A moment of **anagnorisis** has occurred—revelation of the dark man's true identity and the girl's relationship with him. Now we can revisit the **dream ego's attitude** and note how her fear of the dark man has changed to realization of connection with him and the girl. The dream has a clear **resolution**: the dark, numinous masculine and divine child are no longer secreted away in psyche's depths.

The dream maker is ever attempting to widen our perspective and points to the paradoxical union of the girl and the dark man—they are the same and they are different. There are many images for the **union of the opposites**, and this image is **symbolic**. Jung says, "It is a fact that symbols, by their very nature, can so unite the opposites that these no longer diverge

or clash, but mutually supplement one another and give meaningful shape to life."[2] Like conductive copper wire, the girl links the personal world of the dream ego and the archetypal world of the dark man by holding hands, an image of wholeness evoking connection to the **Self**.

The **final sentence** of the dream is an important piece of **dialogue** that is surprising and enigmatic; it compares war to the frenzied fury of a pack of dogs. In Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, Mark Antony calls for a retaliatory uprising after Caesar's assassination: "Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war!"[3] The dark man's ferocity preserved the girl's life, and the girl, once vulnerable, now claims her capacity for assault. There is a new integration of love and aggression.

Dreams provide a **fresh perspective**. They rebalance our psychic scales and set our internal house in better order. They may contradict a conscious attitude, complement it, or—more rarely—confirm it. Despite the original enmity between the man with the torch and the dark man, the dream does not contradict the ego attitude but **complements** it by adding what is missing: the dream ego's relationship with the psychic content represented by the girl and the dark man. The baby, when embraced by the dream ego, grows, and the dark man becomes protective and then connected with the dream ego. The theme of connection does not contradict the dreamer's or dream ego's stance but adds to the dream ego's willingness to **go toward** unconscious content.

> We know that something unknown, alien, does come our way, just as we know that we do not ourselves make a dream or an inspiration, but that it somehow arises of its own accord. What does happen to us in this manner can be said to emanate from mana, from a daimon, a god, or the unconscious.
>
> —C. G. Jung

Interpretation

An interpretation of a dream involves a statement that summarizes our best understanding of the dream maker's message. Not all dreams yield a

succinct interpretation, but thoughtfully exploring dream elements familiarizes us with its parts and may allow us to construct a cohesive, hypothetical whole. Only the dreamer can affirm a dream interpretation's accuracy.

This remarkable dream traces a development in the relationship between the dreamer and parts of herself in the deep interior. It shows a process of transformation. The dream begins with the swaddled baby and dark man in the underground, far removed from consciousness. The dreamer's capacity for self-protection and aggression has developed over time, symbolized by the dream baby's rapid growth. The dream ego's readiness to reach for the baby set the drama in motion, bringing all the dream figures to the surface of consciousness. Power and aggression acquired archetypal force in the inner world in the service of protection and repression. Now it is available to the ego and can be expressed in the outer world, indicating psychic integration. Something has been transformed. What had been split off has now been integrated and can be lived out consciously, and this allows her to relate creatively to the transpersonal center of the personality that Jung called the Self.

This powerful dream depicted a reorientation of the dreamer's attitude to herself and to life. Perhaps it relates to her healing process in recovering from the trauma of the abusive relationship. She has achieved a renewed connection with an aspect of herself and is ready once again to consider becoming vulnerable in an intimate partnership.

Now It's Your Turn

Now that you have these keys, what is the best way to use them? Make writing down your dreams the first thing you do in the morning on awakening. Before you reach for your phone or get in the shower, reach for your pen and dream journal. Write the dream down with as many details as you can remember. If you're short on time, make notes to help you recall it later—and then don't forget to come back to it and fill in more specifics when you have time. Even if you don't work to understand your dream, recording it signals to the dream maker that you are listening. Weeks, months, or even years later, it can be meaningful to revisit your dream journal and realize that it has documented your inner journey.

Perhaps you only remember your dreams infrequently. That's okay. When you have a dream, make sure to write it down and work with it using the keys. People commonly dismiss "small" dreams—those that are fragmentary, contain "boring" ordinary imagery, or whose meaning seems obvious at first glance. Be careful not to disregard dreams that consciousness deems unimportant. Often such ordinary little dreams yield striking insights. Value all of your dreams.

If you dream frequently, you may not have an opportunity to work deeply with every dream. That's okay, too. Once a week, make some time to spend on your recent dreams. Pick one that is still fresh—the imagery feels alive and has energy. You might pick the dream that elicited the strongest emotion or the one that you found yourself thinking about the most. Go back to your dream text, read it through, and let the images and emotions come alive again for you.

Using the Keys to Unlock a Dream's Meaning

When working with a dream, use the keys we've covered in this book. A complete list of keys is included in an appendix at the back. Begin going through them one at a time. Be methodical and avoid the temptation to go too fast or skip over things that seem obvious. It can be helpful to journal your responses to each of the keys. Some of the keys won't apply to your dream, and you can set those aside. Be careful, however, not to dismiss a key too quickly. If there is any chance it might fit, try it, at least briefly. Insight is usually surprising and comes from unexpected quarters. If you stick too much with what you already know, you'll miss out on the mind-opening, perspective-shifting wisdom of your dreams.

As you work on your dream, you may have an immediate sense of what it means. Such quick takes are not always wrong, but they are often at least incomplete. Be skeptical of the conscious mind's tendency to quickly nail down neat interpretations. Even if your initial sense of the dream's meaning *is* substantially correct, you probably haven't fully understood its message.

Although the keys can be applied in any order, it is usually best to begin with associations. These reliably form a foundational basis for understanding dream images. Write down all the significant elements in your dream—people, places, and things—and then ask yourself, *What is the*

essence of this for me? Check the associations key for other questions to prompt your thinking. Once you've captured associations, pick another key and try it. Varying which key you start with may help keep your thinking fresh. Therefore, we suggest that you select keys at random. You may find a few that you like best, but occasionally try others to stimulate fresh perspectives. As each key is an invitation to circumambulate the dream, all will eventually lead to the same center of meaning, just as the paths up a mountain eventually converge at the summit.

The keys related to active imagination are a little different from the others. They are aimed at helping you interact with the dream and live into its message. These can be used to deepen the experience of a dream and allow for a fuller conversation with the dream maker. You can always engage in active imagination even if you haven't been able to try any of the other keys.

> Nothing is so characteristic of dreams as to steal space and to create without time. The sleeper then converses with sheep and fancies their bleating to be speech, and he understands their talk. So new and so extensive a wealth of subjects is there for one who has the courage to let loose his language upon them.
>
> —Synesius of Cyrene

Though it might seem daunting to go through the keys, you won't need to use them all. Often a dream's meaning will open up after just a few keys, and it will get easier with practice. Using the keys is a little like doing the Sunday crossword puzzle. Though all the empty spaces can be intimidating when you begin, every time you fill in one clue, you are building answers to others. Remember that the dream maker is trying to communicate with you, so often this is not an arduous process. Go through the keys one by one until meaning is made. Usually this won't take too long. Some dreams will remain mysterious no matter how much you struggle to understand them. Then you must simply bow to its mysterious otherness knowing that you have approached it with respect and reflection.

Sometimes we apprehend a dream's meaning only after months or even years. Dreams that continue to feel fresh and immediate even after a long time often contain important messages that relate to major life themes. Consider revisiting such dreams and try working with them using the keys.

How Do You Know When You Have Understood?

Jung was clear that only the dreamer can know if a dream interpretation is accurate. An intellectual assent—a thought that a certain proposed meaning makes sense—is not enough. An embodied experience of agreement is necessary. "Most people," wrote Jung ". . . know when the interpretation 'clicks'; when there is a feeling that it absolutely hits the fact, one knows one is on the right track."[4] The click may feel like an "aha!" Usually it comes with a slight, physical shift in your body. There is a moment of *knowing*, and you feel subtly different.

If you're unsure if an interpretation fits, try asking your body. Take a moment to settle into yourself. You may want to close your eyes and take a few breaths. Then let the dream and your sense of its meaning sink into your embodied awareness. Turn your attention inward. Take the time to note any subtle sensations, slight physical shifts, or images. Let your body answer. Does the interpretation fit? Mostly? A little bit? Not at all?[5] If your body is uncertain, know that you engaged as fully as possible with the dream. It may well reward you with clearer imagery in a subsequent dream. Alternatively, the effort you made may pay off with an unexpected insight that comes out of the blue a day or two later.

The dream maker may confirm a correct interpretation with a subsequent dream that picks up the same theme and moves it forward. A woman was disturbed after she dreamed of having sex with her young adult daughter. Working with the dream led to an understanding of her dream daughter as a positive shadow figure—an image of valuable qualities she was beginning to claim. The following week, she had a dream in which her daughter appeared as a strong and valiant fighter—and when the dream daughter turned to look at the dream ego, she bore the face of the dreamer. The second dream seemed to firmly support the dreamer's understanding of the first dream.

Likewise, the dream maker may let you know if you've misunderstood. One man dreamed his dog was being pecked at by a blue jay while attacking another dog. He understood the dream as commenting on his tendency to fight with his wife. A few days later, he had another dream about his dog, but this time it was being attacked by a large, prehistoric bird. The dream maker appeared to have turned up the volume, offering more intense imagery to emphasize that its message had not been received.

You have the keys to your dreams, and we encourage you to refer to the complete list of them in the appendix that follows as a checklist and guideline. Make them yours. Perhaps new questions will arise for you as you become intimate with your dream maker and learn its patterns. Make notes about what works and what doesn't. Add your own thoughts and ideas. Like a favorite recipe that becomes food-stained and covered with notes over time, we hope the keys will be much used and worked over.

Shared Wisdom

It may seem self-indulgent to spend so much effort on our personal dreams when there are so many problems in the world. However, Jung taught that each person's psychological work contributes to an advancement in consciousness that can directly affect the outcome of major world events. If Jung was right—and we believe he was—then the individual work you do on your dreams contributes to humanity's development.

In our years of podcasting, the three of us have worked together to interpret hundreds of dreams "on air," in the belief that sharing dreams with our listeners each week is a modern version of dream sharing. In many traditional cultures, dream sharing plays an important role in communal life. The Yansi of central Africa share dreams to help make decisions important to the group, and the Xavante of Brazil share dreams as part of adolescent initiation rituals.[6] In sharing dreams, we meet on common ground in the unconscious. Sharing dreams reminds us of our connection with one another and communicates the mysterious underground wisdom that we all share. How might our psychological collective be subtly altered by tens of thousands of people each week participating in sacred dream sharing as they listen to the podcast?

Dreams have meaning beyond the personal; we participate in the psyche writ large by working with our dreams. Psychoanalyst Max Zeller visited Jung after World War II. The world was troubled, and Zeller had doubts about his vocation. He related this dream to Jung:

> A temple of vast dimensions was in the process of being built. As far as I could see—ahead, behind, right and left—there were incredible numbers of people building on gigantic pillars. I too was building on a pillar. The whole building process was in its very first beginnings, but the foundation was already there, the rest of the building was starting to go up and I and many others were working on it.

Jung said, "Ja, this is the temple we all build on. We don't know the people because, believe me, they build in India and China and in Russia and all over the world. That is the new religion."[7] Jung was pointing to new spiritual development in the collective. This dream is for all of us working worldwide toward a new evolution in consciousness. Dreams connect us with the transpersonal nature of existence and remind us that we are children of the universe. As you work with your dreams, you are helping to build the temple of the new religion.

A Steadfast Ally

From childhood through adolescence, young adulthood, and maturity, dreams help us anticipate challenges and respond to the call to individuate. Even at the end of our lives, dreams gently guide us home. Hospice workers know that death is often preceded by dreams of deceased loved ones that are vivid and comforting.[8]

A few weeks before his death, Jung dreamed that "he saw the 'other Bollingen' bathed in a glow of light, and a voice told him that it was now completed and ready for habitation. Then far below he saw a mother wolverine teaching her child to dive and swim in a stretch of water." Bollingen was the stone tower Jung built on the shores of Lake Zurich as a place of contemplation and repose. Jung's collaborator and biographer Barbara Hannah noted that in the last phase of his life, Jung "had often dreamed of this 'other Bollingen' before, in various stages of construction,

and he had always spoken of it as being in the unconscious, in the Beyond."[9] Jung's dream assured him that a home awaited him in the inscrutable realm beyond the death of his physical body.

Jung was aware that he had been companioned by the dream maker from his earliest days. He marveled at the extraordinary insights offered to his childhood self, starting at age three or four. "Who spoke to me then?" he asked at the end of his life. "Who talked of problems far beyond my knowledge?"[10] The other within that speaks to us in the mythic language of the soul is the dream maker. You have this ancient, mysterious wisdom within you. It touches the eternal and connects each of us with the infinite. You now have the keys to the inner kingdom, and the adventure of a lifetime awaits.

Acknowledgments

This book was planted far below the ground of consciousness over twenty years ago when Lisa, Joseph, and Deb were Jungian training candidates. Becoming a Jungian analyst is an adventure best likened to a fairy tale's symbolic wonders and terrors—we met magicians, monsters, and magic castles as we wended our way through psychic wilderness. We would never have found our way without wise teachers, supervisors, and especially the analysts who accompanied us weekly through breakthroughs and breakdowns.

Abundant thanks to three special readers for careful perusal and thoughtful feedback: Jungian analysts Linda Leonard and Pat Cochran, and Gestalt therapist Deborah Ullman. Our families have endured the physical absences of our attendance at monthly seminars and semiannual conferences and hours and days when we were engrossed in reading and writing. Deb thanks her husband for his forbearance while she was far away in another room—and for his interest and input on her first . . . second . . . and fourth drafts. Lisa thanks her husband for his patience and support while she holed up in her writing room and ignored all manner of household duties. She is also grateful to her son for his enthusiastic interest in this project and in dreams. Joseph wishes to thank Deb and Lisa for their dynamic vision, abiding faith in the process, wisdom, and late-night rocks thrown at his bedroom window to draw him out to play.

We have special gratitude for the knowledgeable trail guides whose compasses enabled us to steer a steady course toward publication. Our agent, Adriana Stimola, was always on call to answer questions and provide guidance infused with enthusiasm. Haven Iverson, our editor at Sounds True, provided incisive direction that felt so natural and right it seemed we had thought of it ourselves. Her astute recommendations made this book immeasurably better.

All along we deepened our understanding of dreams with our clients. They have been and are at the heart of all we do. Our clients have moved and do move us in myriad ways; a less spoken truth about the therapeutic

process is how much the therapist is challenged, touched, involved, and changed by this soulful work. Our clients' willingness to share their dreams in service of facilitating the learning and growth of unseen others is remarkable.

Thank you—thank you to all our companions and helpers. We know we do not work alone.

Appendix 1

How to Recall Your Dreams

To reap the benefits of dreamwork, we must be able to remember our dreams or at least some of our dreams. You may already be a proficient dreamer. Even if you already recall many dreams, this next section contains tips for improving dream recall and recording your dreams.

Recalling and Recording Dreams

Most of us remember at least a few dreams per week, but about a third of Americans report that they rarely or never remember a dream, according to a 2021 poll.[1] One of the questions we get asked most often is, how can I remember my dreams? Research tells us that we all dream several times a night. When we don't often recall our dreams, we may feel abandoned by our dream maker, by our soul. But our dreams are like the water table. Even when things appear dry on the surface, there are subterranean sources of water. Even when we wake up morning after morning without recalling a dream, our dreaming mind has been active, crafting beautiful, eloquent messages just for us. If we drill down deep enough, we will find them.

Even if you rarely or never remember a dream, there are steps that you can take to improve dream recall. Getting plenty of good quality sleep, setting an intention to remember your dreams, and writing down anything you remember each morning in a special journal are essential steps. If these prove not to be adequate, fear not. There are many other things to try. We've gathered the best techniques we know.

1. Set an intention to remember your dreams.

The dream maker is like a faithful dog: it abides even if you ignore it or fail to feed it. Even if you treat it gruffly, it comes to the door wagging its tail each day when you come home. However, if you begin feeding and petting

the dog, it will return your affection tenfold, for it has been patiently hoping for your attention. Similarly, if you turn toward your dream maker, it will respond with abundant generosity. Your dream maker is within, waiting for you. Just making a commitment to work on remembering your dreams may stimulate dream recall. One way or another, extend yourself to your dream maker.

2. Acquire a dream journal.

If you don't already have one, you will need to purchase a dream journal. Spiral-bound notebooks work well because they stay open and may be easiest to write on in bed, but anything that works for you is fine. Even if you buy your journal at the local drugstore, invest this purchase with a sense of ritual. Your dream journal is a sacred object. Choose a color that appeals to you. Color speaks to the unconscious. You may consider buying a beautiful tooled leather journal that looks like a medieval grimoire or a handmade journal made from colorful collage, but you don't need to spend a lot of money for your dream journal to be special. What matters is your intention.

You may want to invest in a special pen. Pens made for writing in the dark come with a small light at the tip. This can make it easier to jot down dreams in the middle of the night without waking yourself or your partner by turning on the light.

Some people prefer to type their dreams on a computer. While this can work, there is a significant downside. Dream memories tend to be very fragile and will often dissipate within a few minutes of waking. Getting up, turning on your laptop, and opening a word-processing file are likely to knock out fragile memories. There are dream journaling apps for smartphones. Many of these have a speech-to-text function so that you can dictate your dreams. Recording dreams digitally has the added advantage of allowing you to tag entries or text search your journal so that you can easily find all references to specific images or people. However, using an app requires you to pick up your phone first thing in the morning. Doing so can mean instant distractions and intrusions. In addition, the act of writing on paper stimulates the powerful connection between the hand and the brain. The slower pace of recording dreams "the old-fashioned way" may allow

for more dream memories to come up as you write. Experiment to find a method of capturing dreams that works best for you.

3. Write down something every morning.

Make it a habit to reach for your dream journal first thing every morning. Write down any wisps of dreams you recall, no matter how vague or fragmentary. Sometimes we wake up remembering the merest scrap, but as we write, details arise. If you're not sure the person in your dream was your college roommate, allow your hunch. Even a small fragment can yield interpretive gold, and writing down something today often means that we remember more tomorrow. Conversely, dismissing a dream fragment as unimportant sends a message to the dream maker that we don't value what it sends us. Make a commitment to recording dreams regularly and you are very likely to find that you recall more dreams.

It can be helpful to give your dream a title as you write it down. Titles capture the dream's essence, make the key elements stand out, and allow us to find an older dream more easily if we're searching for it.

If you don't remember any dreams, write a short journal entry beginning with "No dream recalled." Then write down anything you notice about how you feel, either physically or emotionally.

Sometimes dream recall is sparked by something someone says to us later in the day or a song we hear on the radio. If a dream snippet arises during a meeting with your boss, do your best to jot it down—a few key words are often enough to spark fuller recall and transcription later in the day.

Consider journaling just before going to sleep to reflect on your day. What is taking your attention or giving you any unease? Or read fairy tales, poetry, or other material that engages the mythopoetic level of the psyche. Ask your dream maker for a dream and promise to record it. The dream maker tends to respond to conscious efforts to attune.

The more you write down your dreams, the more you will remember them. When we write down our dreams and work on them, the dream maker perks up and becomes more communicative because someone is listening and attending. When people work with their dreams regularly, they are having an ongoing conversation with the dream maker. Dreams become

more plentiful, easier to remember, and often easier to understand. We are enlarged and enlivened by recording dreams and engaging with dream images. We can take in content that lets us puzzle over a dream's peculiar message, gain awareness about a life issue we may have disregarded, and consciously experience soul-stirring dream events.

4. Sketch your dreams.

Even if you're not an artist, try drawing dream images each morning upon awakening. A simple sketch can activate visual memory, encouraging more detailed recall.

5. Attend to the temple of sleep.

Dream recall is eroded when we are not sleeping well or not getting enough sleep. Prioritize getting adequate, good quality sleep. Go to bed and wake up at around the same time every day. Make sure your bedroom is cool, dark, and quiet. Avoid engaging in emotionally stimulating activities before bedtime. For many of us, that might mean not checking email late in the evening. An hour or so before going to bed, start winding down, get off screens, and create a gentle sleep ritual for yourself. Caffeine and alcohol can affect sleep negatively, as can regular cannabis use, so consider cutting back if you think any of these might be impeding sleep.

6. Try to wake up some days without an alarm clock.

The alarm clock may be the biggest enemy of dream recall. Though being awakened at just the right moment can sometimes result in vivid dream memories, most alarm clocks don't pay attention to our sleep cycles. If possible, try to wake up without an alarm at least once or twice per week. Progressive alarm clocks that gradually light up the room or otherwise gently awaken a sleeper may be helpful. There are progressive alarm clock apps for smartphones.

7. Drink water at bedtime.

Some wakefulness at night seems to promote better dream recall.[2] Drinking a little extra water at bedtime will encourage natural awakenings during the

night that can help us remember our dreams.

8. Consider supplements.

Studies have shown that vitamin B6 may help with dream recall.[3] The supplement galantamine has also been shown to be beneficial for helping people remember their dreams.[4]

9. Try meditation and hypnosis.

There is some evidence that having a regular meditation practice can improve dream recall. Some people report good results from listening to dream recall hypnosis sessions, and there are many of these freely available online.

10. Try an affirmation.

Throughout the day, repeat to yourself periodically an affirmation such as "I easily recall my dreams."

11. Visualize yourself recalling your dreams.

With your eyes closed, imagine yourself waking up with vivid dream recall. Let yourself experience what that would feel like. See yourself reaching for your dream journal to write down your dreams. Engaging in this visualization each night at bedtime may help promote better dream recall.

12. Talk to your dream maker.

Write your dreaming self a letter. Let it know that you are making a commitment to attend to your dreams and that you plan to record any dreams you receive. With reverence, let your dreaming self know that you would welcome any and all dreams it cares to send you and that you will value them all.

Or have a conversation with your dream maker at bedtime. You might say something like, "Please give me a dream tonight. I would like to recall a dream in the morning."

13. Pay attention to how you wake up.

Lying in bed for a few minutes with your eyes closed can help to retrieve a dream. Try returning to the same sleep position you were in when you first awakened—a somatic cue may prompt a dream to resurface. One additional technique for dream recall is to close your eyes upon waking and visualize a rising sun. This archetypal image of the transition into consciousness can help us find a thread to the night's dreams.

14. Take a nap.

Vivid dreams can often occur during naps. If you are not in the habit of napping, it might be worth giving it a try.

15. Arrange wake-ups.

Laboratory research has taught us that we tend to remember our dreams most easily when we are awakened from REM sleep. If you are really struggling with dream recall, you might try an experiment. Set an alarm to wake you up every one to two hours. During these brief wake-ups, you are likely to remember a dream. Jot down even just a few words to prompt your memory in the morning before going back to sleep.

16. Try the wake-up-back-to-bed protocol.

Researchers studying lucid dreaming have found that the "wake-up-back-to-bed" protocol (WBTB) is effective at promoting lucid dreams. The protocol involves waking up after about six hours of sleep, staying awake for a brief time while reviewing previously recalled dreams, and then going back to sleep. As a teenager, Lisa accidentally discovered that WBTB was effective at promoting vivid dreams. She would wake up at dawn to ride her bike before morning traffic and then go back to sleep. These sleep periods were often filled with distinct dreams that were easily recalled.

Take your quest for dreams seriously, but don't turn it into drudgery. The unconscious responds to an attitude that is inviting and curious. With a little attention and some effort, you will likely find that the font of dreams begins to flow more freely.

Appendix 2

The Ring of Keys: All 69 Keys

Chapter 1 Why Work with Dreams? Becoming Whole

Make a commitment to your dreams.

- If you don't already have a method of recording your dreams, come up with one that works for you. Purchase a dedicated dream journal, download an app, or otherwise create a special place where you will write down your dreams every morning.
- If you have trouble recalling your dreams, visit the first appendix and experiment with some of our suggestions.
- Make writing in your dream journal the first thing you do every morning. Give your dream a title and write in the present tense.

Journaling Prompt

Write a letter to your dream maker expressing gratitude for its guidance. Let the dream maker know that you want to hear its wisdom and will pay attention to the gifts it sends.

Chapter 2 Meet the Dream Maker: Befriending Your Inner Guide

The dream maker is the inner companion.

The dream maker provides a fresh perspective on your life, pointing out what you might not have noticed or have been avoiding. As you consider your dream, imagine it was sent by an inner guide who wants to help you.

Shift into a symbolic perspective.

Be wary of a tendency to "decode" dreams as if they were substitution cyphers. Instead, consider the following:

- What is your sensory experience of the dream? What do you smell, hear, see, or feel in the dream world? What is your embodied experience of the dream?
- How might the dream be showing your current situation in symbolic terms?
- Imagine your dream is a movie. Can you discern key symbolic themes?
- Does your dream contain any relatively fixed symbols such as a tree, the ocean, a cave, or fire?
- Are there images in your dream that might benefit from the use of a symbol dictionary?

Dreams contradict, complement, or confirm the conscious attitude.

Dreams usually tell us something we don't already know. Imagine the dream is an email from the dream maker about a particular life situation. Then consider these questions:

- What new information is the dream maker bringing?
- Does the dream maker seem to be expressing a strong opposition to the conscious attitude?

- Is the dream maker adding a perspective you have disregarded or overlooked?
- Does the dream maker seem to be cheering you on?
- Apply the dream to your life by asking yourself what conscious attitude the dream might be correcting, contradicting, or confirming. Why did the dream maker send you this dream now?

The dream ego's attitude is likely to be wrong.

Although we tend to align with the perspective of the dream ego as we consider our dreams, it's most often the case that the assumptions, feelings, and attitudes of the dream ego are off base. Trying out this assumption with every dream is a good place to start. Consider the following questions:

- What if the attitude of your dream ego is incorrect?
- What if dream elements that seem bad or challenging are in fact bringing something valuable?
- What if you assumed that anything your dream ego finds "wrong" is actually helpful in some regard?

Journaling Prompt

Pretend that you are the element in the dream that opposes your dream ego. What is your perspective on the situation? What do you have to say?

Dreams are usually about the inner world.

Determining whether the dream is about the inner or the outer world helps us orient to the dream's meaning. In weighing which to choose, the following questions are helpful:

- Does the dream feature unknown people or people peripheral to your life?
- Does the dream feature someone well known to you who appears dramatically different? (Perhaps the dream figure is older or younger, behaves bizarrely, or has unfamiliar features.)

- If the answers to these questions are yes, the dream is most likely commenting on the inner world. In this case, you should assume that all dream elements are images of aspects of your own psyche.

However,

- Does the dream feature a close friend, colleague, or family member with whom you interact in daily life?
- If so, does the dream figure appear and behave realistically?
- Intimates that are accurately portrayed in the dream may alert you to unrecognized outer-world relational dynamics.

Reflect on how the dream images might be related to current life concerns.

Does the dream relate to conscious preoccupations? If not, consider the following questions:

- Why are you having *this* dream *now*?
- What occupied your thoughts in the day or two before you had the dream?
- What unanswered questions have you been holding, perhaps just out of conscious awareness?
- Were there any occurrences the day or two before the dream that left you feeling unsettled?
- Is it possible that the dream addressed some of these concerns?

Chapter 3 Dream Images: Association, Explanation, and Amplification

Always explore personal associations to key elements when beginning to work on a dream.

Personal associations are so important that you should gather them for every dream. They are especially crucial for any dream element that has a unique relevance to your life.

- Begin by making a list of people, places, and things in your dream, then note your memories, attitudes, and experiences associated with each one.
- What is the essence of this person or thing?
- In seeking associations to a friend or acquaintance, ask yourself how are you like this person? And in what ways are you different?
- What is your primary emotion about this person or thing?
- Is there a decisive memory that you have about this dream element?
- If an unknown person appears in your dream, can you identify any details that might elicit an association? What does your imagination tell you?
- If there is an artist, actor, or musician in your dream, which work of theirs comes to mind?
- Treat day residue in dreams just as you would any other material. What are your associations to these recent events?

Once you have collected your associations, try applying them by making use of the following questions:

- What part of you is like this?
- Where is this dynamic in your life right now?
- How might you be behaving like this?

Explain a dream element using a common definition.

Describing what a dream element is and what it does can reveal the dream maker's metaphorical intent. Consider the following questions:

- Who is this person or what is this object? Describe it as if you were telling an alien from another planet about the person or thing.
- What is the function of this object or person? What role does this person play? What is this object used for?
- Does etymology throw additional light on a word's meaning?
- Do you notice any wordplay or double entendres?
- How might any of these additional shades of meaning contribute to a symbolic understanding of the person or object?
- Why did the dream maker pick this particular person or object? How does this relate to something going on in your life right now?

Amplify archetypal images using universal references.

Archetypal amplification allows us to find resonance between our dreams and primordial, universal images. Amplification should not take precedence over personal associations, but it can be particularly relevant in those cases without connections or memories related to the dream content. To use the archetypal amplification key, consider the following questions:

- Is your dream full of overwhelming emotion and numinosity? If so, consider whether it is a big dream, one that is born from the realm of the archetypes.
- Are there magical elements in the dream—things that couldn't happen in real life? These are likely archetypal images. You may want to consult a symbol dictionary or the internet to find out more.
- Does your dream call to mind a myth or fairy tale? Familiarizing yourself with such stories can be helpful.
- What is the mythic taproot of the "ordinary" elements? How might understanding these expand the dream's meaning?

Chapter 4 The Dubious Dream Ego: Encounters in the Inner World

Apply the real-life test.

It's helpful to apply the real-life test to dreams. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What if this happened in real life?
- What would I do? How would I feel?
- What would I know that I don't know now?
- How would my life be different if this really happened?

Note whether issues of persona are present.

Dreams may reveal issues with persona—the masks that we wear in the world.

- Does the dream portray any problems with the persona? Might your persona be too rigid? Or inadequate for a social task?
- Are you unprepared or out of place in a dream situation? Does the dream refer to a situation in waking life?
- If your dream ego is wearing an item of clothing in the dream, how might it relate to your social roles?
- In dreams where you appear naked or inadequately clothed, does the dream seem to point to an outer situation in which you don't know how to be or are exposing too much of yourself because you do not have a sufficient, socially appropriate "mask"?
- Does the dream show a persona that is highly inauthentic or inflexible?

Look for images of complexes.

- Does your dream feature an image that could relate to a challenging area of your life? The dream might be tracking a familiar complex.

- How does your dream ego behave? How does it relate to the familiar challenge?
- What does the dream show about the relationship between your dream ego and the complex?
- When parents appear in your dream, consider that they may be images of a parental complex—part of your psychological "operating system."
- What is the relationship between your dream ego and the dream parent?
- How is this similar to or different from your relationship with your actual parent?
- Does the dream illustrate how your "operating" system may be influencing your waking life?
- Does the image show an evolution of the complex? How has it changed since previous dreams?

Take note of what the dream says about relationships in the inner world.

- What is your dream ego's initial attitude? What does it know or assume? Is there evidence in the dream that this assumption is correct?
- Who or what opposes your dream ego's position? What values or attitudes might the opposing part represent?
- How does your dream ego relate to other dream elements? Does it move toward, turn away, or turn against?
- What does the action of your dream ego say about how you are treating inner conflicts?
- Is your dream maker exposing a tendency to avoid conflict?

Journaling Prompt

What is the dream element that opposes, challenges, or frightens your dream ego? What do you imagine it wants? What assumptions does your dream ego make about this element?

Look for images of psychological defenses—the customary ways you manage the anxiety of inner conflict.

- Does the dream provide an image of a defense? What is the dream maker's assessment of it?
- Does the dream indicate that your defense may be creating a problem? Is it too rigid or does it keep you from accessing creativity, aliveness, or intimacy?

Chapter 5 Emotions: The Dream Maker's Palette

Notice any transfer of emotion.

- Is there a sudden shift in emotions during the dream? If so, ask yourself where it came from. Did it come from another dream element?
- Is there a non-ego element that expresses a strong emotion in the dream? Consider that it may be transferring these feelings, deepening your range of conscious emotions.
- Does the strong feeling present in the dream correspond to feelings you may have been unaware of or have been repressing? Does the dream make these feelings more available to consciousness?
- Where are these feelings in your life currently? Where have they been before now?

Positive feelings in dreams can usually be trusted.

- Does your dream ego feel good about something? This can usually be taken at face value unless there is evidence to the contrary.
- Does your dream maker appear to be cheering you on? Or offering you encouragement during a difficult time?
- Do pleasant feelings in a dream help to clarify an ambivalent image?
- Is there evidence that positive feelings are wildly inappropriate to the dream situation? This might be a warning that consciousness is perilously out of touch with a potential risk.

Sadness and grief can open the heart.

Dreams that feature sadness and grief are usually an invitation to feel these emotions more deeply and integrate them into consciousness.

- Note whether the dream has given you greater access to your sadness. Perhaps you can shed tears you weren't able to find before.
- If the dream depicts a sad situation but you feel neutral, that's okay. For now, note the feeling pictured in the dream. The dream is inviting you

to step closer to this emotion, but it can take time.

- Dreams that surface feelings of sorrow can help you find self-compassion.

Journaling Prompt

What part of the dream calls up sadness? Write about that part in detail, focusing on feelings. If there is an animal, child, or other wounded being in the dream that carries sadness, what would you like to say to that part? If it could speak, what would it say to you?

Anger can be appropriate and productive or a signal we're working against our growth.

An angry dream ego may reveal what your dream maker thinks of your attitude. If your dream ego is angry, consider the following questions.

- Who is your dream ego angry at?
- What is your dream ego angry about?
- Is it possible that your dream ego's anger represents a defensive attitude toward an unconscious aspect of yourself?
- Does your dream ego's anger help to resolve the crisis depicted in the dream, or does it lead to stalemate?

Disgust in dreams can point to feelings of shame and self-hatred or express a necessary revulsion.

A disgusted dream ego may be your dream maker's way of showing you your own self-loathing and shame.

- Who or what is your dream ego disgusted by?
- Could that thing be a despised and rejected aspect of yourself that now seeks acceptance and integration?
- Does the dream have a clear resolution?
- If so, did disgust help to motivate your dream ego in a positive direction?

Fear in dreams often reflects a misplaced ego attitude.

When your dream ego feels fear, your dream maker is likely depicting your relationship with an aspect of yourself that feels off-limits and therefore dangerous.

- What is your dream ego's relationship with the frightening element in the dream?
- If you are afraid of an element in the dream, there is a good chance that you have met an aspect of the unconscious that feels threatening because it challenges the psychic status quo. What might that element be wanting to communicate to you?
- Does the dream have a clear resolution? If so, does it provide guidance on how to relate to the frightening images?
- Your dream maker may use the intensity of nightmares to get your attention. How might your nightmare be helpful?

Chapter 6 Theater of Dreams: Structure and Dynamics

Pay attention to the setting and initial situation.

Note the setting and initial situation in your dream, usually given in the first sentence or two of a dream text. These will likely provide important clues as to the dream's "agenda." Dream settings provide an immediate sketch of the psychological landscape. You might consider the following questions:

- Does the setting point to a domain that tells you what aspect of your life the dream is speaking to? (For example, if your dream is set at the office, it is likely related to work.)
- Do you have personal associations to the dream setting?
- Can you use explanation or archetypal amplification to further understand the significance of the setting?
- In the initial situation, what other actors are present? Is there a balance between male and female characters? What action is underway?

Make a note of the main action in the dream.

The action is the main development in the dream drama.

- What gets revealed?
- How might it be related to what has come before and what comes after?
- Is there a new setting? How is it different from the first setting? How is it the same? Is it referring to a different part of the psyche or situation?

Identify the crisis in the dream.

- What's the high point of the action?
- What is your dream maker emphasizing?
- What seems to be at stake?
- What change has occurred or will be required?

Pay attention to the dream's resolution-or lack thereof.

- Is the dream situation resolved?
- If so, what change in the ego attitude does the resolution seem to suggest?
- How is the final situation different from the initial situation?
- What is the final sentence of the dream text, and how is this the answer to the question your dream maker has asked?
- What is the final image? What emotional tone does it evoke? How does it relate to the main theme explored in the dream?
- If there is no resolution, what are the unanswered questions? What seems to be hanging in the balance?

Ask yourself what role you've been cast in.

- What is the role of your dream ego? Hero, victim, leader, follower, fixer, observer, trickster, and lover are a few possibilities.
- Does your role in the dream mirror one you play in waking life?
- Does the dream indicate that there might be a problem with this role?

Journaling Prompt

What is your role in the dream? Where in your waking life do you play this role? Is this role working for you in the dream? Does it work for you in waking life? In what ways does it not work?

Apply the when/then construction.

In dreams, sequence usually implies causation.

- When something happens in a dream, it can be useful to ask yourself, *What happened right before that might have "caused" this?*
- When there are sudden scene shifts, assume that whatever occurred right before the shift caused the change. One thing leads to the next. Apply when/then and see if it opens understanding.

Look for repetition.

Note repeating figures and situations in dreams.

- Look for repeated words, images, themes, figures, colors, numbers, and so forth.
- What is your dream maker trying to highlight?
- What seemingly disparate parts may go together?

Ask yourself whether hyperbole or humor is present in the dream.

- Does your dream feature highly charged images?
- Is the dream maker using hyperbole to underscore its point?
- Is the dream maker's tone playful? Hopefully you had a laugh and got the message!

Note whether the dream depicts a moment of critical discovery, or anagnorisis.

- Does your dream ego make a crucial discovery that moves it from ignorance to knowledge?
- Does this discovery allow your dream ego to move from inaction or reaction to action?
- How is your dream ego changed by this new knowledge? What is its feeling state?
- How does the discovery relate to a new awareness in your waking life?
- What new understanding might be coming into consciousness in waking life?

Note instances of dialogue, whether spoken by your dream ego or by non-ego elements.

- Words spoken by dream figures other than your dream ego may be your dream maker's way of emphasizing a message.

- Words spoken by your dream ego can give us a clear picture of how your dream maker sees the ego attitude.

Consider whether there are opposites.

Opposites can reveal dynamic tensions and potential blockages in the psyche, or a creative resolution to a tension.

- Where are there opposites in the dream?
- How do they relate to each other?
- What is your dream ego's relationship to each aspect of the polarity—friendliness, fear, or something else?
- Where does such a polarity occur in your life right now?

Is your dream organized like a diptych or a triptych?

- Does your dream have two or three scenes that are seemingly disjointed? Consider whether they are commenting on the same theme from different perspectives.
- What do the dream scenes have in common? Finding the common theme may help you "triangulate" information to reveal your dream maker's point.
- What happens if you assume that they are multiple versions of the same theme?
- Where is this theme in your life currently?

Is the dream organized like a song, with verse, chorus, and bridge?

- Does your dream have many scenes? Note commonalities in different scenes and see if you can map the structure. Your dream maker may make its point much like a musical idea is developed over the course of a song.
- Do scenes share common themes? How do they relate to one another?
- Could they have a cause-and-effect connection?
- How might the themes in the dream relate to your life now?

Read the feeling tone of chain-reaction dreams.

- Is your dream full of chaotic and confusing imagery?
- Note the feeling tone in the dream. Are you facing a similar emotional experience in your waking life?

Chapter 7 Time and Telos: Past, Present, and Future

Explore images from the past in your dreams.

If your dream features images from the past, try applying the following questions:

- What was going on for you at the time pictured in the dream?
- Are there similar themes occurring in your life now?
- Are you behaving in a way that was appropriate to an earlier time?
- Is there unfinished business from that time in your life?
- If you dream of a new baby, what was going on in your life nine months ago?
- If a child appears in your dream, what was significant when you were that age? What happened that many years ago?

Journaling Prompt

Write about the time referenced in the dream. What were you like? What was your life like? How were you different then? How are you the same now?

Take note of images of the present.

Most dreams are a snapshot of our current psychic reality.

- Does the dream seem to emphasize something about this moment right now? What is it wanting you to pay attention to?
- How is the situation in the dream like a current life situation?
- What is the dream maker's attitude toward the situation in the dream? What adjustments is the dream asking you to make?

Keep in mind the prospective function of dreams.

Like a weather report, dreams can show future probabilities. If your dream seems to reference the future, apply the following questions:

- What does the dream say about what's likely to come next?
- How might this dream be a warning? How might it portend a positive development?
- What is the feeling tone of the dream's prospective function?
- Does the dream offer comfort or reassurance during a difficult time?

Look for a wide-ranging review of key life issues.

Dreams that reference past, present, and future may offer an overview of our psychological situation.

- Does your dream reference the origin of your current situation, where you are now, and where you're heading?
- What does the dream maker want you to know about where you have come from and where you are going?
- Does the dream illustrate overarching life themes?

Especially if you're stuck, ask yourself where telos is in the dream.

The unexpected and new may carry the main message of the dream.

- Where is the surprising, stop-time image in the dream?
- How does your dream ego respond to the new thing? Is there evidence of defensiveness?
- Can you be open to the perplexing newness of the telos element?
- Where might the new thing be pointing in your life right now?

Chapter 8 Shadow: The Inner Exile

Aspects of yourself that you might not feel comfortable acknowledging can show up as a same-sex figure.

- Does a same-sex figure appear in your dream? Consider this person might represent shadow qualities that you have tried to repress or deny.
- What does the dream say about those qualities? Do they meet with success?
- Is there a person in your dream from your waking life whom you don't like or find irritating? How have you disowned or disallowed the qualities that most irritate you in that person? What qualities might you need to claim and integrate?
- What does the dream tell you about your tendency to push away or deny these parts of yourself?
- Where or how are you encountering this shadow element in your current life?

Friends and siblings often represent disowned qualities in ourselves.

If your dream features a same-sex friend or sibling, consider how this person might hold shadow for you.

- What about this person activates feeling in you? Is it an attitude or value you have disallowed?
- Are you jealous of this person in waking life? Of what are you jealous? This could indicate an unlived potential that you haven't owned in yourself yet.
- What underdeveloped aspect of yourself does this person represent in the dream?
- What themes in your current life does this friend or family member symbolize?

Look for the positive potentials in shadow.

Shadow is full of potentials that, if conscious, can be used for positive purpose.

- How are the shadow figures in your dream showing you traits, attitudes, and capacities that you might consciously relate to and develop?
- How is your dream ego resisting or fighting against this trait?
- How is the shadow figure in your dream a possible guide or ally?
- What part of you is your dream maker inviting you to consider?

Journaling Prompt

Even when a shadow figure seems dark, disgusting, or dangerous, what can you learn from it? Explore the shadow figure in your dream to discover what hidden potentials it points to.

Look for life-denying images in dreams.

Archetypal shadow shows up in dreams as any attack on the life force itself. Such dreams can be terrifying and nightmarish. When you have such a dream, apply the following questions:

- How might the dream depict an inner energy attacking your life force?
- Where is this anti-life energy at work in your life?
- Does the dream suggest a way to address this force?

Consider whether your dream maker is pointing out how you behave in a shadowy way.

- Does your dream ego act in a way that is unappealing, off-putting, or uncharacteristic?
- How have you been behaving similarly in waking life without being conscious of doing so?
- How might your dream maker be holding up a mirror? What shadowy part of yourself is the dream maker showing you?

Become curious about dream images that may reveal primal shadow.

- Does a dream contain images of putrefaction, defecation, or other content that inspires disgust, fear, or shame? Such content may be shadow asking for understanding and acceptance.
- What is the dream maker letting you know about how you treat that part of yourself?
- Does the dream offer any guidance on befriending that part of yourself?

Chapter 9 Anima and Animus: Our Unrealized Possibilities

Explore whether opposite-sex dream figures are images of anima/animus.

The anima/animus is the personified image of your unlived potential. It is compelling. Often it appears in dreams as an opposite-sex figure.

Consider the role the positive animus plays in your dream.

If you are a woman and have a positive opposite-sex figure in a dream, consider the following questions.

- In what role does he appear? Helper? Companion? Teacher?
- What is the medicine he is offering?
- What inner qualities might he represent? What is he inviting you to embrace?
- Do the themes present in the dream relate to what is going on in your life? Is the animus there to help you face an outer challenge? Commit to and celebrate your creativity? Deepen your spirituality?
- How does the dream ego respond to the animus? Does it reflect openness to what the animus is offering?

Dark, dangerous, or daunting opposite-sex figures may be images of animus—notice how they appear and what your relationship is to them.

- Is the figure wholly negative? Is he really harmful or dangerous? Or is that the dream ego's assumption?
- If he is attacking, does his behavior correspond to a tendency to attack yourself? Does his attack remind you of the way that you talk to yourself, for example?
- How does the dream ego respond to this negative content?

- Is the negative animus a paradoxical figure? Is he asking you to grow even while he is attacking you?
- How might the animus figure be asking to be transformed through a confrontation with consciousness?

Look for an invitation on behalf of the animus to connect more deeply with shadow.

- If an animus figure and a shadow figure appear in your dream, what is the relationship between them?
- What is the dream ego's relationship with each of them?
- Is the animus encouraging the dream ego to acknowledge shadow qualities?
- How does the relationship between the animus and shadow figures relate to your current life?

Journaling Prompt

Note the qualities of the shadow figure. What is most irritating or off-putting about this dream person? How is the animus inviting you to reconnect with or claim these qualities?

Notice how the positive anima appears in your dream.

If you are a man and a woman shows up in a positive role, she might be an image of positive anima.

- In what role does she appear? Benevolent guide, nurturer, or sexual partner?
- What is the medicine she is offering?
- What qualities is she inviting you to embrace?
- How does your dream ego relate to her? Is he closed off, resistant, fascinated?
- How do the themes present in the dream relate to matters in your current life?

- Does the anima invite expansion, such as enhanced feeling, spirituality, or life force?
- Does the dream reflect openness to what the anima is offering?

If the anima appears in its negative aspect, pay attention to the role it plays.

- How does the anima figure treat the dream ego? Is this how you treat yourself at times?
- Do you need to stand up to an inner critic?
- What is the anima figure asking of your dream ego?
- What is your dream ego asked to do, change, or sacrifice? How might this correspond to waking life? For example, what outdated attitude has to die?

Note how the anima encourages a connection with shadow.

When anima and shadow appear in the same dream, consider their relationship with each other.

- What is the relationship between the anima and shadow figures in the dream?
- What is the dream ego's relationship with each of them?
- How might the anima be inviting an engagement with the shadow?
- How does the dream dynamic relate to your current life situation?

Journaling Prompt

What are the key features of the shadow image in your dream? What is irritating or off-putting about this dream figure? How is the anima inviting a connection?

Images of union reflect key developments in the inner world.

Images of the union of opposites appear in dreams to reflect a process of deep integration.

- Is there a union with a lover or a wedding in your dream?
- Does the dream show a union with an anima or animus figure? Does this partnership speak to a psychological culmination?
- In dreams, sexual intercourse can symbolize psychospiritual union and integration.

Chapter 10 The Self: The Guiding Center

The Self may appear as a therapist, doctor, or healer.

- Does your dream feature a doctor, therapist, or other healer? The dream figure may be an image of the healing function of the Self.
- How is this figure helping you orient to future health and growth?
- What in your life relates to the Self appearing in this guise?

The Self may appear in dreams as a child.

- Does your dream feature a child or infant?
- Does this image have a strong emotional valence? Might it carry transpersonal significance?
- Does the dream indicate the child is a symbol of the urge toward wholeness and growth?

The Self may show up as a companion and soul guide.

- Does your dream feature a teacher, a wise companion, or soul guide?
- Does the dream feature an image of a wise old man or woman, perhaps in an unlikely guise?
- How might this dream be offering you encouragement from your guiding center?

Journaling Prompt

What is the perspective of your dream ego? What is the perspective of the soul guide? Where do they differ, and where are they alike?

The Self may appear as a magical animal.

Animals that appear in dreams and convey a feeling of numinosity may be images of the Self.

- Does the animal in your dream inspire awe?

- Does it have supernatural abilities or behave in an unusual way?
- Why do you imagine your dream maker sent you this image at this time in your life?

The Self may show up in dreams as religious imagery.

- Has the dream maker used religious imagery to convey the transpersonal power of the Self?
- Did the dream bring reverence, awe, and abiding comfort?

The Self may appear in a dark and frightening form.

The Self can show up as pitiless and annihilating. Such dreams can be frightening or upsetting.

- How is the Self image confronting your ego attitude?
- Is the dream addressing an attitude, impasse, or quandary in your waking life?
- Is the dream asking for recognition of or reverence toward that transpersonal center of the psyche?
- How might the dream be trying to correct a psychic imbalance?

The Self may manifest in dreams in images of the center or of wholeness.

- The Self may be implied in dreams by images of wholeness.
- Does your dream contain circles, spheres, rings, trees, eggs, gold, cities, or similar images? These can all signify the Self.
- Does your dream have profound emotional power? Self images in dreams are frequently numinous.
- Is there an image in your dream that offers comfort or encouragement?
- Why might this image be appearing now?

Chapter 11 Active Imagination: Dreaming the Dream On

Engage your dreams in waking life through active imagination.

Follow the steps below to engage in active imagination.

- Find a time and place where you will not be disturbed. Turn off your phone, lock the door, or go somewhere free of interruptions. You will need at least half an hour.
- Engage in a small ritual. This helps separate your active imagination time from the rest of your day. It also signals receptiveness. You might light a candle, hold a special object, sit in a particular spot, or listen to a chant to invoke the unconscious.
- Center. This may involve closing your eyes and taking a few deep breaths. You might soften your gaze while looking at a certain image or engage in a visualization such as taking an escalator into the depths as you slow your breathing and focus inward.
- Call to mind the dream or other image you wish to engage and hold that image in your mind until it begins to move of its own accord. If your attention wanders, gently bring it back to the image.
- Address your comments or questions to the dream character. *What are you here to teach me?* is a good general question to ask.
- Listen for the response. Simply receive what comes up. There is no need for logic, objection, or doubt—you can do that later! Continue the dialogue until it feels done.
- Record your experience and reflections in your dream journal.

Paint, draw, or sculpt your dream.

- Use whatever materials you have on hand to create an artistic representation of your dream.
- Allow yourself to play. Enjoy the process.

- Don't worry about the artistic merit of your creation. You are creating a deepened connection with the unconscious by engaging it in this manner.

Embody your dream.

- Use motion and gesture to embody your dream. Move as you did in the dream, perhaps even exaggerating certain gestures.
- Note any subtle sensations or emotions that emerge.
- Journal about your experience afterward.

Create a ritual in your waking life to honor the dream.

- Does the dream invite you to take any action? What can you *do* with this dream?
- How can you honor the dream?
- Is there a symbolic gesture you can make in your waking life?

Experience the dream through the perspective of a non-ego dream figure.

- Relax. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Call to mind a recent dream featuring a character with whom you would like to engage.
- Reenter the dream as if it is a movie that you can start from the beginning. This time, instead of being "you" in the dream, experience the action as if you were the other character. Inhabit that perspective as fully as possible.
- Notice what it feels like to be the other person (or animal). What do you see? What are you wearing? What are you feeling and thinking? How do you experience your interactions with your dream ego?
- When you're done, write down this character's "side of the story" and your reflections.

Use the two-chair technique.

- Set up two chairs facing each other.
- Sit in the "me" chair and speak a thought, feeling, or question to the dream figure. Feel free to use gesture and other forms of physical expression.
- Move to the dream character chair and speak from his or her perspective. Let yourself say whatever comes up, again using any gestures that naturally arise.
- Move back and forth between the chairs, letting those two parts of yourself have it out with each other. Physical movement helps to distinguish the dream characters, and body language enhances their viewpoints–which depict the dreamer's inner conflict. It leads to a newly felt "knowing" as voice, emotion, and body come into consciousness more fully.

Journal your way into the imaginal realm.

Here is a list of possibilities to use writing as a door into the imaginal world:

- With your dominant hand, write down questions or reactions addressed to a non-ego dream figure. Transfer the pen to your nondominant hand and wait for the reply.
- Draw a vertical line down the center of a piece of paper. Use one side for the ego, or "me" part of the dialogue, and the other side for the dream figure's voice.
- Read your dialogue aloud to involve voice and body.
- Write as rapidly as possible without allowing your hand to stop moving even if you have to write nonsense or "I don't know what to write." The eye-hand-brain connection is powerful and something will inevitably come up.

Consult your imagination to find out what happened before or after a certain dream image.

If your dream opens with a puzzling image or ends on a cliff-hanger, consider using prequel or sequel to explore what might have happened

before or will happen after.

- How did this initial situation arise?
- What happened right before the curtain rose on the dream to create the opening situation?
- For a cliff-hanger ending, what does your imagination tell you about what will happen next?

Journaling Prompt

Write a brief history of what happened in a dream figure's life prior to appearing in your dream—or what has happened to the dream figure since the dream.

Resources

Books on Dreams

Boa, Fraser. *The Way of the Dream: Conversations on Jungian Dream Interpretation with Marie-Louise von Franz*. Boston: Shambhala, 1994.

Bosnak, Robert. *A Little Course in Dreams*. Boston: Shambhala, 1998.

Bulkeley, Kelly. *An Introduction to the Psychology of Dreaming*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2017.

Gendlin, Eugene T. *Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams*. Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications, 2004.

Hall, James A. *Jungian Dream Interpretation: A Handbook of Theory and Practice*. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1983.

Johnson, Robert A. *Inner Work: Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.

Jung, C. G. *Dreams*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Klerk, Machiel. *Dream Guidance: Connecting to the Soul Through Dream Incubation*. New York: Hay House, 2022.

Shields, Leland E. *Dreamwork: Around the World and Across Time—An Anthology*. Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin, 2008.

Taylor, Jeremy. *The Wisdom of Your Dreams: Using Dreams to Tap into Your Unconscious and Transform Your Life*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2009.

Whitmont, Edward C., and Sylvia Brinton Perera. *Dreams, a Portal to the Source*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Symbol Dictionaries

Biedermann, Hans. *Dictionary of Symbolism: Cultural Icons and the Meanings Behind Them*. New York: Meridian Books, 1994.

Chevalier, Jean, and Alain Gheerbrant. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. Translated by John Buchanan-Brown. New York: Penguin, 1997.

Cirlot, Juan Eduardo. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. New York: New York Review of Books, 2020.

Cooper, J. C. *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987.

de Vries, Ad. *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1974.

Ronnberg, Ami, and Kathleen Martin, eds. *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images*. Cologne, Germany: Taschen, 2010.

Websites

The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, aras.org/

ARAS is a rich online repository of archetypal imagery accessible with a membership.

Dream School, thisjungianlife.com/enrollpage/

Dream School is our twelve-month online course that teaches you how to work with your dreams.

This Jungian Life, thisjungianlife.com/

Our weekly podcast discusses a range of Jungian topics and always includes a discussion of a listener's dream. You can also submit your dream for possible interpretation on the podcast at our website.

Apps

Elsewhere Dream Journaling App

A safe, private space to record your dreams, track them over time, and learn about their unfolding patterns of meaning.

Temenos Dream App

A dream analysis tool and social network for dreamers.

Notes

Introduction: The Call to Adventure

1. Fraser Boa, *The Way of the Dream: Conversations on Jungian Dream Interpretation with Marie-Louise von Franz* (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), 11–12.
2. C. G. Jung, *C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*, ed. William McGuire and R. F. C. Hull, Bollingen Series (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 231.
3. C. G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 160.
4. Murray Stein, *Jung's Map of the Soul: An Introduction* (Chicago: Open Court, 1998), 11.
5. Carolyn Wilke, "Do Spiders Dream? What about Cuttlefish? Bearded Dragons?" *Knowable Magazine*, August 30, 2023, knowablemagazine.org/content/article/living-world/2023/do-animals-dream.

Chapter 1 Why Work with Dreams? Becoming Whole

1. C. G. Jung and Aniela Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 418.
2. C. G. Jung, *C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*, ed. William McGuire and R. F. C. Hull, Bollingen Series (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 359.
3. Jung and Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 218.
4. C. G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 24.
5. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 8, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), para. 50.
6. Jay Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene: Philosopher-Bishop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 60–61.
7. C. G. Jung, "3 June 1936," in *Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1934–1939*, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 977.
8. Jeremy Taylor, *The Wisdom of Your Dreams: Using Dreams to Tap into Your Unconscious and Transform Your Life* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2009).
9. Edward C. Whitmont and Sylvia Brinton Perera, *Dreams, a Portal to the Source* (London: Routledge, 1991), 181.
10. Kelly Bulkeley, *Dreaming in the World's Religions: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

Chapter 2 Meet the Dream Maker: Befriending Your Inner Guide

1. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 17, *The Development of Personality*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), para. 189.
2. C. G. Jung, *The Red Book: Liber Novus* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 310.
3. James Hollis, *The Archetypal Imagination* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 119.
4. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 8, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), para. 644.
5. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 16, *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), para. 341.
6. Patricia Berry, *Echo's Subtle Body: Contributions to an Archetypal Psychology* (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1982).
7. C. G. Jung, *Visions: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1930–1934*, ed. Claire Douglas (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 406.
8. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 10, *Civilization in Transition*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 197), para. 321.

Dreams of Death: Symbolic Endings

1. Jeremy Taylor, *The Wisdom of Your Dreams: Using Dreams to Tap into Your Unconscious and Transform Your Life* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2009), 66.

Chapter 3 Dream Images: Association, Explanation, and Amplification

1. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 8, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), para. 533.
2. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 8, para. 539.
3. Gayle Delaney, *Living Your Dreams* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).
4. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 5, *Symbols of Transformation*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), xxv.
5. C. G. Jung, *Letters*, vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Adler, trans. Jeffrey Hulen (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1976), 57. Emphasis in the original.
6. Job 41:10–11, NRSV.

Chapter 4 The Dubious Dream Ego: Encounters in the Inner World

1. Michael Vannoy Adams, *The Mythological Unconscious* (Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 2010), 241.
2. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 10, *Civilization in Transition*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), para. 673.
3. Charlotte Beradt, *The Third Reich of Dreams* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 63.

Chapter 5 Emotions: The Dream Maker's Palette

1. Andrea Rock, *The Mind at Night: The New Science of How and Why We Dream* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).
2. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 13, *Alchemical Studies*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), para. 464.
3. Fraser Boa, *The Way of the Dream: Conversations on Jungian Dream Interpretation with Marie-Louise von Franz* (Boston, Shambhala, 1994), 88.
4. Iain McGilchrist, "A Well-Aligned Mind: How to Be Alive," *This Jungian Life*, November 18, 2021, thisjungianlife.com/episode-189-a-well-aligned-mind-how-to-be-alive/.

Chapter 6 Theater of Dreams: Structure and Dynamics

1. Fraser Boa, *The Way of the Dream: Conversations on Jungian Dream Interpretation with Marie-Louise von Franz* (Boston: Shambhala, 1994).
2. Edward C. Whitmont and Sylvia Brinton Perera, *Dreams, a Portal to the Source* (London: Routledge, 1991), 73.
3. Boa, *Way of the Dream*.
4. Michael Vannoy Adams, *The Mythological Unconscious* (Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 2010).
5. Whitmont and Perera, *Dreams, a Portal to the Source*.
6. Patricia Berry, *Echo's Subtle Body: Contributions to an Archetypal Psychology* (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1982).
7. Boa, *Way of the Dream*, 14.
8. *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "anagnorisis," March 20, 2024, merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anagnorisis.
9. Matthew 13:46.
10. Ole Vedfelt, *A Guide to the World of Dreams: An Integrative Approach to Dreamwork* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017), 91.

House Dreams

1. Deirdre Bair, *Jung: A Biography* (New York: Little, Brown, 2003), 297.

Chapter 7 Time and Telos: Past, Present, and Future

1. C. G. Jung, *Children's Dreams: Notes from the Seminar Given in 1936–1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 360.
2. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 16, *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), para. 297.
3. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 16, para. 298.
4. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 8, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), para. 493.
5. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 16, para. 299.
6. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 8, para. 494.
7. Sam Knight, "The Psychiatrist Who Believed People Could Tell the Future," *New Yorker*, February 25, 2019.
8. C. G. Jung and Aniela Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 368.
9. C. G. Jung, *C. G. Jung Letters*, vol. 1, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffé (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 460–61.
10. Patricia Berry, *Echo's Subtle Body: Contributions to an Archetypal Psychology* (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1982).
11. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 18, *The Symbolic Life*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), para. 684.

Chapter 8 Shadow: The Inner Exile

1. C. G. Jung, *Dream Analysis: Part I, Notes of the Seminar Given in 1928–1930* (London: Routledge, 1995), 53.
2. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 11, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), para. 131.
3. Fraser Boa, *The Way of the Dream: Conversations on Jungian Dream Interpretation with Marie-Louise von Franz* (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), 172–73.
4. This comment was attributed to Jung by Jungian analyst C. Toni Frey-Wehrlin.
5. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 12, *Psychology and Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), para. 38.
6. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 7, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), para. 285.
7. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 7, para. 286.
8. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 11, para. 140.

Bathroom Dreams

1. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 5, *Symbols of Transformation*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), para. 276.

Chapter 9 Anima and Animus: Our Unrealized Possibilities

1. Murray Stein, *Jung's Map of the Soul: An Introduction* (Chicago: Open Court, 1998), 137.
2. Fraser Boa, *The Way of the Dream: Conversations on Jungian Dream Interpretation with Marie-Louise von Franz* (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), 144.
3. Boa, *Way of the Dream*, 144.
4. Boa, 175.
5. Boa, 144.
6. Marie-Louise von Franz, *Archetypal Dimensions of the Psyche* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 322-323.
7. Boa, *Way of the Dream*, 119.

Chapter 10 The Self: The Guiding Center

1. C. G. Jung and Aniela Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 233.
2. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 7, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), para. 399.
3. Jung and Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 236.
4. Black Elk, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, ed. Joseph Epes Brown (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 142.
5. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 14, *Mysterium Coniuntionis*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), para. 778.
6. Fraser Boa, *The Way of the Dream: Conversations on Jungian Dream Interpretation with Marie-Louise von Franz* (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), 27.
7. C. G. Jung, *C. G. Jung Letters*, vol. 1, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffé (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 377.
8. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 11, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 230.
9. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 7, para. 211.
10. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 7, para. 217.
11. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), para. 289.
12. Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard*, The Charles Elliot Norton Lectures (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 140.
13. Boa, *Way of the Dream*, 2.
14. Joseph Campbell, with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 279.
15. Jung and Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 234–35.
16. Jung and Jaffé, 235.
17. Jung and Jaffé, 379.

Childhood Dreams

1. C. G. Jung, *Children's Dreams: Notes from the Seminar Given in 1936–1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 135-136.
2. C. G. Jung and Aniela Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 28.

Chapter 11 Active Imagination: Dreaming the Dream On

1. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 14, *Mysterium Coniuntionis*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), para. 706.
2. C. G. Jung, *C. G. Jung Letters*, vol. 1, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffé (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 460.
3. C. G. Jung and Aniela Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 218.
4. Robert Bosnak, *Tracks in the Wilderness of Dreaming: Exploring Interior Landscape Through Practical Dreamwork* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1996), 12.

Chapter 12 Working with a Dream: Using the Keys

1. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), para. 278.
2. C. G. Jung and Aniela Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 396-397.
3. William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (Delhi: Fingerprint! Publishing, 2019), act 3, scene 1, line 273.
4. C. G. Jung, *Dream Analysis: Part I, Notes of the Seminar Given in 1928–1930* (London: Routledge, 1995), 18.
5. Eugene T. Gendlin, *Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams* (Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications, 1986).
6. Kelly Bulkeley, *The Spirituality of Dreaming: Unlocking the Wisdom of Our Sleeping Selves* (Minneapolis, MN: Broadleaf Books, 2023).
7. Max Zeller, *The Dream: The Vision of the Night* (Sheridan, WY: Fisher King Press, 2015), 2.
8. Christopher W. Kerr et al., "End-of-Life Dreams and Visions: A Longitudinal Study of Hospice Patients' Experiences," *Journal of Palliative Care* 17, no. 3 (March 2014): 296–303, doi 10.1089/jpm.2013.0371.
9. Barbara Hannah, *Jung, His Life and Work: A Biographical Memoir* (Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications, 1997), 344.
10. Jung and Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 28.

Appendix 1 How to Recall Your Dreams

1. Fred Backus, "CBS News Poll: How Often Do You Remember Your Dreams?" *CBS News*, CBS Interactive, December 3, 2021, cbsnews.com/news/remember-dreams-opinion-poll/.
2. Meeri Kim, "Study: The Key to Remembering Your Dreams Might Be the Blood Flow to Your Brain," *Washington Post*, February 22, 2014, washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/2014/02/22/486125e2-9a56-11e3-b88d-f36c07223d88_story.html.
3. Audrey Kim, "The Nerve Blog," *The Nerve Blog RSS*, May 1, 2018, sites.bu.edu/ombs/2018/05/01/vitamin-b6-may-improve-dream-recall/.
4. Stephen LaBerge, Kristen LaMarca, and Benjamin Baird, "Pre-Sleep Treatment with Galantamine Stimulates Lucid Dreaming: A Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled, Crossover Study," *PLOS ONE* 13, no. 8 (August 8, 2018), doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0201246.

About the Authors

Lisa Marchiano, Deb Stewart, and Joseph Lee are the team behind the popular depth psychology podcast *This Jungian Life*. Lisa corralled Deb and Joseph during a break in a meeting to propose doing a podcast together. The trio first recorded around a card table in Lisa's office in 2018, discussing a variety of topics and always concluding by discussing a listener's dream. They soon began recording virtually with audio and added video in 2023. In 2020, they launched Dream School, a self-paced, online course in dream interpretation. They have been and are inspired by listener ideas, participant interaction, and connection with a worldwide community.

Lisa is the author of *Motherhood: Facing and Finding Yourself* and *The Vital Spark: Reclaim Your Outlaw Energies and Find Your Feminine Fire*, both published by Sounds True. She lives and practices in Philadelphia. Deb divides her time between Cape Cod and Florida, where she loves to spend time with family, especially her grandchildren. She has served as the director of admissions for the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts and is active in the Philadelphia Association of Jungian Analysts. Joseph tends his analytic practice in Virginia Beach, lectures frequently on the Hermetic Kabbalah, and mentors emerging teachers in that tradition. Most weekends, you'll spot him on the quiet rural waters of the North Carolina shore near Edenton.

About Sounds True

Sounds True was founded in 1985 by Tami Simon with a clear mission: to disseminate spiritual wisdom. Since starting out as a project with one woman and her tape recorder, we have grown into a multimedia publishing company with a catalog of more than 3,000 titles by some of the leading teachers and visionaries of our time, and an ever-expanding family of beloved customers from across the world.

In more than three decades of evolution, Sounds True has maintained our focus on our overriding purpose and mission: to wake up the world. We offer books, audio programs, online learning experiences, and in-person events to support your personal growth and awakening, and to unlock our greatest human capacities to love and serve.

At SoundsTrue.com you'll find a wealth of resources to enrich your journey, including our weekly *Insights at the Edge* podcast, free downloads, and information about our nonprofit Sounds True Foundation, where we strive to remove financial barriers to the materials we publish through scholarships and donations worldwide.

To learn more, please visit SoundsTrue.com/freegifts or call us toll-free at 800.333.9185.

Together, we can wake up the world.